MEMORIAL

NATHANIEL MILTON WOOD

SERMONS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.
BX6333
Chap. ..... Copyright No. .....
Shelf .W67M4
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

MEMORIAL

OF

NATHANIEL MILTON WOOD,

WITH

SERMONS.

EDITED BY

NATHANIEL BUTLER.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT
No. 5827
1877
CITY OF WASHINGTON

LEWISTON, ME.
GEO. A. CALLAHAN, PRINTER.
1877

"We are passing away. The places that now know us shall soon know us no more. But when we are dead we shall not be all dead. Our shadows will not die with us. Nay, on many hearts they may fall with mightier power than while we live."—*Dr. Wood's Sermon on Moral Shadows.*

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON

PREFACE.

THE Sermons contained in this volume, with the exception of the first, were not prepared for publication, and are printed as they were left by their author, with only such alterations as were necessary to prepare them for the press. The Sermon on *The Christian Alternative* is printed as it appeared as an Article in the Baptist Quarterly; and that on *The Relation of the Divinity of Christ to the Atonement* as it was prepared and read as an Essay before the Illinois Baptist Minister's Institute.

All the Sermons now published are not regarded the best that were written by Dr. Wood: some of them appear at the request of his personal friends, who remember them with great satisfaction, and desire to possess them in the form in which they are now given.

The Editor acknowledges his obligations to the REV. WASHINGTON LEVERETT, LL. D., the REV. J.

Bulkley, D. D., Prof. O. L. Castle, the Rev. Thomas G. Field, the Rev. C. H. Rowe, and especially to the Rev. W. H. Shailer, D. D., for aid in the preparation of this volume.

The Editor.

Bangor, *May*, 1877.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PART I.

		PAGE.
I	PREFACE.	3
II	MEMORIAL ADDRESS.	9

PART II.—SERMONS.

SERMON I.

The Christian Alternative: Jesus the Messiah, or Jesus an Impostor, 3

SERMON II.

The Relation of the Divinity of Christ to the Atonement, 35

SERMON III.

The Gospel proved Divine by its Perversions, 62

SERMON IV.

The Attest of Christian Experience, 78

SERMON V.

The Enormity of Little Sins, 97

SERMON VI.

The Christian's Vocation, 112

SERMON VII.

Moral Shadows, 126

MEMORIAL DISCOURSE.

MEMORIAL DISCOURSE

BY

NATHANIEL BUTLER.

I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.—2 TIM. IV. 7.

This side of its immortal life, the Christian character exhibits no sublimer results than those which often appear at the close of its earthly course. Then it assumes a grandeur and nobility of bearing to which none other can make an approach. The earthly ending of other callings, however commanding they may have been, is attended with the inevitable feeling that they have come to the "sere and yellow leaf;" that decay is near; that they are disrobing themselves of their beauty and their strength, and are ending in death. But when they are putting off their might in the silent helplessness of death, the Christian,—drawing the breath of a newer vitality, and assuming fresher garments of divine beauty, and gathering up its powers to spring to sublimer heights, and massing its wealth of conflict and toil,—

is marching away to its crown of life, and its endless reward.

Such is the attitude of Paul as he writes the text. He has the royal bearing of an heir who has a kingdom to take. Towering above all forms of earthly greatness, he lifts his face, glorified with immortal hope, and gazes away upon the kingdom that awaits his coming. But even while he gives himself to the contemplation of such a prospect, he turns to retrospect. He looks adown the way he has come. The ends of this way have met,—the house of Judas in Damascus, and the opening gateway of glory,—the weakness of his new-born life, and the strength that will measure itself in flight with an archangel's wing,—and between the two lie the preparation, the fightings, and the steadfastness of his life. "I have fought a good fight, * * henceforth there is laid up for me a crown." The waiting kingdom and crown are, in thought, inseparably connected with the conflict for which they are to be given, and the glory before him, throwing its light upon what is behind him, makes the past vivid, as sunset glories brighten eastern hills.

This great apostle of the Christian Church has, therefore, furnished a precedent worthy to be followed—that the close of a Christian life may most fittingly be attended by a memorial of it. He wrote his own: we write that of others.

A just memorial of a man is such an exposition of the facts of his life as will give a truthful indication of its character. If it be of a bad man, the memorial will record that the prominent and characteristic facts of the life were bad, and the better acts will be so obscure and insignificant as scarcely to claim attention, or as only slightly to relieve the shadow that lies over all. If it be of a good life, worthy acts will be those which will chiefly claim attention, and faults will have been so insignificant as scarcely to have had an observable influence, or if they have had any, they will dim, by only a slight degree, the lustre of the character, as flecks in the marble of a beautiful statue are unnoticed in admiration of the faultless proportions of the figure. It is thus that we account for the fact that the memorials of good men give such prominence to their praiseworthy deeds, and so little to their unworthy acts. Anything that would make conspicuous their faults would be unjust, for they were not the prominent points in their characters.

The life which now claims our attention was a beneficent one, and the record which will be made of it will be of the beneficent influence it had. We shall tell, so far as we can, what gave it that influence. The good man, though dead, shall yet speak and live for his Master and for us. He and those who were like him do not need this service at our

hands. They are where, under the leading of the Lamb over the hills and plains of immortality, they will doubtless be forever coming to the blessed memorials of their earthly living. We look around for the monuments they here set up, and, as we find them, we bless their builders.

Upon the coast of Maine, at a point nearly midway between its eastern and western extremities, and just within the southern capes of the Penobscot Bay, there is a cluster of hills, rising nearly to the dignity of mountains, which, seeming to dip their feet in the waters of the sea, and their sides and summits clothed in a soft, purple bloom, present one of the most remarkable views upon the American coast. Among these hills lies a lake, of no very great dimensions, but of great beauty, whose clear waters, a mile or two from the lake itself, by a quick succession of rapids, fall suddenly into the sea. Upon the banks of this rivulet, within the sound of the ceaseless music of these rapids and of the grander music of the sea, in the village of Camden, Nathaniel Milton Wood was born. His birth-day was May 24th, 1822. The house which was his birth-place and his early home, stands to-day, as it was at the day of his birth. His life, till early manhood, was passed where, so far as material surroundings could impress their influence upon the character, that impression must have been of a most decided character. It is

probable that the imposing scenes which were ever before the eyes of the boy — the glorious mountains and the sea, with their solemn and everlasting inspiration — helped to give the sterling intellectual strength, and independence of thought, which marked this man, who, in after years, like the mountains that overshadowed his boyhood, rose till he towered above nearly all who stood around him.

His father was Ephraim Wood, who was born in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1774, and removed from that place to Camden about the year 1795. Descendants of the Wood family are now citizens of Concord, and the ancestral mansion is in their possession. Ephraim Wood was distinguished for vigor of intellect, reliability of judgment, and great integrity. He was engaged in extensive mercantile and commercial pursuits, and filled offices of trust in his town. He was the husband of three wives, and the father of thirteen children. His second wife was Prudence Mirick, who became the mother of one daughter and three sons, of which number Nathaniel was the youngest. The only surviving son is Hon. Ephraim Wood, Ex-Judge of Probate of Knox County, Maine. The daughter is S. Maria Wood, of South Boston, a lady of great excellence of character, whose whole life has been intimately connected with that of the subject of this memorial,

and whose sisterly devotion brought sunshine to his home, and gentle ministrations to him in his dying days. The mother of these children came of a stock that was remarkable for decision and firmness of purpose, — qualities which she transmitted to her youngest child. She died when he was five years of age.

The lady who subsequently took the place of a mother to the boy was Mahitable B. Rogers. She filled that place with great affection and fidelity, and lived to see this object of her charge grow to the honored and useful man that he became, and saw him laid in his grave. A memorial of Nathaniel M. Wood would be incomplete indeed, that did not record the strong virtues and singular excellence of this remarkable woman. She still lives, in the full possession of her vigorous mind, at the age of eighty-seven.

There was nothing, in the boyhood of Mr. Wood, that gave promise of the circumspection and conscientiousness which conspicuously marked his manhood. As a child he was willful and wayward; and he gave his friends no little anxiety by his love of boyish mischief, which, while it did not lead him to any great moral delinquencies, was the source of discomfort to those whom his conduct immediately affected.

In 1835 a very extensive revival of religion oc-

curred in Camden, when he was thirteen years old. He believed that at this time he gave himself to Christ. Many who knew him best shared in this belief; and although, for several years, his life was very far from exhibiting a consistent Christian character, he always dated his conversion to God at that time. At this period, great caution was exercised in encouraging children to make a profession of religion. Mr. Wood's father was cautious to a fault, and in religious faith evinced a timidity that never characterized his son, who inherited from his mother great firmness and tenacity of purpose. When some of the fruits of the religious interest were to be gathered into the Baptist Church, the son wished to be with them; but the father's habitual caution denied him; and on the day of the church conference, when new members were to be received, he was sent into the field to work. This was a great grief and trial to him. But he formed a purpose in this matter, and at that early age took a step which exhibited an independence of thought and a determination to follow his own convictions, no matter what others might think, — a disposition which characterized him preëminently in all his subsequent life. Without the knowledge of any of his family, he called upon the Pastor of the Congregational Church and offered himself a candidate for membership. He was not received, because his father

objected. But if he had been a man he would have united with the church, though all the world, outside the church, had opposed him.

The result which invariably follows the neglect of a public profession, by old or young Christians, followed the omission in this case; and for eight years subsequent, the young man became a wanderer in religious life. He was constitutionally frail, and being inclined to study, his father gave him the choice between using the small patrimony that would be his own, in mercantile pursuits or in a classical course of study. He chose the latter. He completed his preparation for college at the school of Rev. Edward Freeman, at Camden, and entered the Freshman Class in Waterville College, — now Colby University, — in 1840. During his first two years in College, — while in his studies he acquitted himself with credit, — he was known as a young man apparently indifferent to religious matters, and one of a company which led in the wild sports which belong to some phases of college life. In his Junior year — in 1843 — a marked religious interest prevailed in the College. He became the subject of very deep religious impressions. For a short time his convictions were most pungent and painful. He was thoroughly reclaimed and restored to the enjoyment of a spiritual life. His letter written to his father at this time indicates that, for

several years, he had been a very great wanderer from God. But his restoration was complete; and he never afterward dishonored his Christian profession. He was baptized in 1843, in Camden, by Rev. Daniel Bartlett, and united with the Second Baptist Church in that town. He was graduated, with honor as a scholar, in the class of 1844, at Waterville. This class numbered twelve, eight of whom became clergymen: Rev. William Corthell, Rev. John R. Greenough, Rev. Samson Powers, Rev. Lorenzo D. Royce, Rev. George W. Stickney, Rev. Nathaniel M. Wood, D. D., Rev. John B. Wheelwright, and Rev. William M. Bicknell.

Immediately upon leaving College, Mr. Wood went to Washington, D. C., ostensibly in search of employment. But there were hidden impulses moving him that were known only to himself. He was struggling with and against a conviction that he should preach the Gospel. He had chosen another calling for himself, and his hopes and ambitions led him in another direction than that indicated by the evident promptings of the Holy Spirit. When he went to Washington he was, like the prophet, running away from God's call and command, and, like Jonah, he ran into fearful difficulties. Forming the acquaintance of Ex-Governor Tucker, of Mississippi, he went with him to that State as a teacher. He remained six weeks with his hospitable friend, upon

his plantation. But those six weeks were probably weeks of greater mental suffering than he had ever known. He was amid all the horrors and cruelty of a Southern slave plantation, with no employment to divert his attention from those horrors. The fearful scenes he witnessed were new and unimagined by him. There was not another white person on the plantation beside himself, his host, and the overseer. After remaining a day or two he would gladly have fled, had he the means of going, or any place to flee to. There was, however, no alternative but to remain till Providence should release him. Jonah's prison was scarcely more "the belly of hell" than was that slave plantation to this young fugitive from duty. He was held there till he was glad to covenant with God that, if he would deliver him from his trouble, he would "go and preach." At the expiration of six weeks, a situation was opened to him, as tutor in the family of General Browning, of Columbus, Miss. He filled this position about one year, when, providentially falling in with a student about to enter upon a course of theological study, he entered with him the Western Baptist Theological Institute, at Covington, Ky., under the charge of Rev. R. E. Pattison, D. D. He pursued his studies at this school for a year and a half, till the summer of 1847, when he returned to Maine.

When he left his native state in 1844, Mr. Wood

was fleeing from his duty; he returned within three years, ready cheerfully to labor wherever his Master should appoint him a place. That place was immediately opened to him at Bloomfield—now Skowhegan—Maine. He entered upon his work in that town in December, 1847, spending the winter in the family of Rev. Charles Miller.

Mr. Wood was ordained Pastor of the Baptist Church in Bloomfield, May 13th, 1848. The following were the services at his ordination: Reading of the Scriptures, by Rev. I. Merrill; Introductory Prayer, by Rev. William Tilly; Sermon, by Rev. A. Kalloch; Ordaining Prayer, by Rev. C. Miller; Charge, by Rev. A. Drinkwater; Right Hand of Fellowship, by Rev. G. W. Stickney; Address to the Church, by Rev. H. G. Nott; Concluding Prayer, by Rev. W. H. Hathaway, of the Congregational Church, Bloomfield. After the lapse of nearly thirty years, this ordination is remembered as an occasion of extraordinary interest, and fruitful of happy results. It was immediately followed by a religious awakening, and the young pastor began to gather at once the fruits of his own devoted labors and of those of his predecessor, Rev. C. Miller. A paper adopted by this Church, at the time of Mr. Wood's resignation of the pastorate, states that "during the short period of four years, about one-half of the present number of the Church have

been brought from the power of sin to a knowledge of the true God." His own record is that he baptized in Bloomfield, every month, after his ordination in May, 1848, till the following April, and received in all, by baptism, seventy-nine. In the year 1849 he baptized into that Church — then not a large one — fifty-eight. Among these were Rev. S. C. Fletcher, Rev. C. F. Weston, and Rev. Edw. Wyman. Thus, in the very beginning of his ministry, he witnessed the results which attended him in every field of his labor — the conversion of large numbers to God.

Mr. Wood was married, September 26th, 1848, to Caroline L. Bray, daughter of the Rev. Sullivan Bray, of Dresden, Me. The children of this marriage were, Maria E., Carrie Ella, and Annie P., of whom Mrs. Wood and the two elder daughters are living. Annie died, at Lewiston, Me., November 2d, 1865.

Mr. Wood was in Bloomfield four years, till January, 1852. The recollection of this pastorate, by those still living, is of one of great prosperity; and the memory of the pastor is held in great affection and reverence by all who knew him intimately there. He had, at this time, acquired the reputation of a strong and clear thinker and an able preacher. The Baptist Church in Waterville judged him to be a man peculiarly adapted to fill the place of the

preacher, to whom the Faculty of the College and the students could listen with profit, as well as to be a successful pastor in that locality. He received and accepted the call of this Church in Jan., 1852.

During several years of his service at Waterville, he gave himself to close study and to careful preparation for the pulpit. His sermons, written within this period, — especially those upon Christian doctrine,—evinced a clearness of thought and logical accuracy rarely surpassed. It was at this time he wrote his masterly sermon upon the Messiahship of Christ, which he incorporated in an article which was printed in the second volume of the *Baptist Quarterly*, and entitled: *The Christian Alternative: Christ the Messiah, or Christ the Impostor.* The results which attended his preaching at the beginning of his ministry followed his work at Waterville. In 1852 a very extensive religious interest existed. Dr. Wood's own judgment was that, in the village and in the College, nearly one hundred were hopefully converted to God.

In 1858, a very general religious Revival existed in his Society, The legitimate influence of his peculiar method of presenting the truth was apparent in this interest. With fidelity and unsparing directness he preached the weighty doctrines of the Word of God. He wielded, as his favorite weapon, the Law, and dealt such tremendous blows that his friends

became fearful that he was too plain and severe: but, in due time, such fidelity resulted in the sure conquests God's truth wins. Many were converted, —among these were many students in the College; and among the citizens were men whose age and condition of unbelief had placed them beyond the ordinary subjects of reclaiming grace. A just estimate of a pastor's success is not always reached by determining the number he adds to his church; but it will assist in forming a true judgment of Mr. Wood's success, in this instance, to know that, although very many who professed conversion in this Revival, did not unite with the Church, he baptized, within a few weeks, fifty-seven, who did become members of it. A History of the Waterville Church, published in 1872, records that "After eight years of faithful service he resigned, December 18th, 1859."

At this date, Rev. George Knox, who had been Pastor of the Baptist Church in Lewiston from its constitution — a period of twelve years — concluded his service with that Church. He preached his farewell sermon at Lewiston on the last Sunday in 1859, and on the same day Mr. Wood preached his, at Waterville, and on the first Sunday in 1860 filled the pulpit at Lewiston, accepting the call of the Church in that city. It was a very pleasant incident connected with this settlement, that Mr. Knox was still

with the Lewiston Church, and with great cordiality welcomed his successor to the place he had, himself, so well filled for so many years. Mr. Wood lived to officiate at the funeral of Mr. Knox, who a few years later was buried in Lewiston.

Mr. Wood began his service at Lewiston in the full vigor of his physical and intellectual manhood; and the six years he spent there were among the best of his life. He held a commanding position among the ministers of the city; and in the community one of wide influence. But that which marked this pastorate above, perhaps, any other of his, was the extraordinary Revival in 1862. During the early months of that year — while yet his own people were moved in no unusual manner — to him was imparted a measure of faith that foresaw the coming of the glory of the Lord. He labored with unwearying and increasing zeal to prepare the way, till his own and other churches were brought into a state of expectancy of the coming blessing. He was chiefly instrumental in procuring, at Lewiston, the services of the Rev. Edw. P. Hammond, with whom all the churches cordially coöperated. Then succeeded that great rain of blessing which flooded that city with rivers of salvation. It was judged that more than three hundred were converted at this time. On the first Sunday in June, 1862, Mr. Wood united with the pastors of the Methodist and

Free Will Baptist Churches in administering baptism; when one hundred and one were baptized. He baptized and received to his own Church eighty-eight, during the summer.

In November, 1865, he was called to the first great domestic affliction of his life, by the death of his youngest daughter, Annie Porter, at the age of twelve years. It was a heavy blow upon him, which he bore like the strong and trusting Christian that he was. The shadow of this sorrow lay, with a subduing and mellowing influence, over all his subsequent life, and the memories, and perhaps more than memories, of the lost one swelled the gladness of his dying hour.

After six years of labor in that city, Mr. Wood believed his successful work in Lewiston was done, and in March, 1866, he vacated his office there. In August of the same year, he assumed charge of the First Baptist Church in Thomaston.

The entire period of this pastorate — a period of eighteen months — was one of spiritual prosperity among his people, and his Church was increased by about the same number that was added, by him, to the churches he previously served. He was accustomed to refer to the months passed in Thomaston as the happiest in his ministry. He had, in his congregation, men of sterling character and strong minds, just such as he loved to preach to, and such

as could appreciate the stronger points in his own character and preaching. To this people he became warmly attached: and as evidence that this feeling was entirely reciprocated, it will be sufficient to record, that when Dr. Wood was laid aside from active work in his last illness, the people of Thomaston were among the first to remember him and his family, in those expressions of sympathy and love which were doubly blessed, — blessing both those who gave and those who received; and in his latest days did he especially love to refer to the benefactions of that Christian lady, Mrs. Jane Y. Fish, who, with others, will wait for a full recompense at the resurrection of the just. He severed his connection with the Thomaston Church in 1868.

While serving as pastor in the several churches already named, Mr. Wood filled the office of President of the Maine Baptist Convention, in 1854, and was its Secretary in 1855. He was Secretary of the Maine Baptist Missionary Society, for ten years, from 1857; and when this Society and the State Convention were united, under the name of the Maine Baptist Missionary Convention, he was the first Corresponding Secretary, and served one year till he removed from the State. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of Waterville College for seven years, from 1862; and in 1867 received from

this institution — his *Alma Mater* — the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Very soon after his settlement in Thomaston, Dr. Wood received earnest solicitations from Upper Alton, Ill., through Rev. R. E. Pattison, D. D., of Shurtleff College, to accept the pastorate of the church in that place. He declined to listen to them. Early in 1868, these were renewed and pressed with great earnestness. He was personally known to members of the College Faculty, who were desirous that the College should enjoy the advantages of his great ability as a preacher. He weighed, long and carefully, the request of the people of Upper Alton, and accepted the call; and in May, 1868, with his characteristic energy, he went to his work. He found the church edifice a most inconvenient and unsuitable structure, and proceeded, very soon, to procure a better one. He succeeded, through great obstacles, in building a house of worship worthy of the place and of the College, and which stands a monument of his untiring and painstaking labor.

His pastorate at Upper Alton had the general character that marked all others which he held. Unusual religious interest prevailed in his congregation. Within the four years he was there, considerable numbers were converted, among the students of the College, and of Rural Parke Institute, a College for young ladies; so that here, as in Wa-

terville, he was honored in being allowed to lead into the Christian life not a few who have gone from the influence of his life to bless the world, — men and women whose education he helped to sanctify to the service of Christ. His official connection with this church closed on March 13th, 1872.

During the last twenty months of his pastoral services with his church, he filled, provisionally, the chair of Systematic Theology in Shurtleff College; and in March, 1872, was elected to that Professorship. He retained this Professorship till June, 1874, —making four years of service in the College.

When Dr. Wood was solicited to accept the call of the church at Upper Alton, it was with representations which led him to believe that a position of great usefulness was opened to him; and these representations were the sincere and truthful convictions of those who made them. Had these expectations been realized, he would, doubtless, have entered upon the period of his greatest usefulness. He determined to go to Illinois, incurring what is always a hazardous experiment, — accepting a call to a field which was entirely unknown to himself by personal observation. But, when he entered it, it was with all the devotion and zeal of which he was capable; and especially did he devote himself to the interests of Shurtleff College. This institution had financial embarrassments; its friends were endeav-

oring to extract from these; and Dr. Wood coöperated with his associates in this endeavor. After six years of whatever of earnest effort he was capable, he reached the conviction that there remained nothing more that he could do efficiently in Upper Alton, and he therefore resigned his Professorship, in June, 1874, greatly to the regret of many of the best friends of the College.

Dr. Wood did not regard his work in Illinois as being the most successful of his life — certainly it was the period of his most anxious and arduous toil — but it is probable that no part of his life will yield greater, more lasting, or more beneficent results. He was a Trustee of Shurtleff College for six years. No member of the Board was, during that time, more prompt and more constant in attendance upon its meetings, or served on more important committees than himself; and this was no light draft upon him, for the meetings of the Board were very frequent and its sessions often of great length. Of his connection with the Board no better statement can be made than appears from the following extract from a letter from the Rev. Thomas G. Field, pastor of the Baptist Church in Alton, and Secretary of the Board of Trustees: "Dr. Wood was elected a member of the Board of Shurtleff College, July 8th, 1868. He was present at every subsequent meeting of the Board — excepting perhaps one — until he

left Upper Alton. He labored effectively to improve the financial condition of the College from his very arrival. He was elected member of the Executive Committee, June 9th, 1869, and served as chairman of that Committee from June 8th, 1870, to June 12th, 1872, — and as Secretary of the Board from the latter date until June 10th, 1874. He constantly pressed the importance of increasing and securing endowments, and obtaining the debts due the College — of providing a substantial income for the increase of the library, and for the aid of ministerial students. His loss fills us all with unfeigned grief, but surely the glory of heaven is brighter for his advent."

Upon the acceptance of his resignation of his Professorship, the Board passed the following resolutions :

Resolved, That we accept with regret the resignanation of Rev. N. M. Wood, D. D., of the Chair of Systematic Theology, in the Theological Department of this College.

Resolved, That in doing so we extend to him our sincere thanks for his fidelity and attention to duty as an instructor ; and assure him of our appreciation of his various labors in behalf of the College.

Resolved, That our best wishes will go with him to future fields of usefulness ; and we hope that the

continued blessing of our Heavenly Father may rest upon him.

The record of Dr. Wood's work at Upper Alton may well be concluded with the testimony to its value given by the Rev. Washington Leverett, LL. D., of Shurtleff College. He writes:

"The results of his judicious plans and faithful labors, for both the Church and the College, have ceased not to be beneficial, and are still measurably shaping their destiny for good."

Upon his return from Illinois, in June, 1874, Dr. Wood made his residence in South Boston, Mass. For more than a year and a half he preached as a temporary supply and as a candidate for settlement, in various churches in Massachusetts; but for reasons that were inexplicable to himself and to his friends — but doubtless clear to a higher wisdom — no field was opened to him. It seemed remarkable that for the use of his wealth of experience and his great ability as a preacher there should have been no demand, among all the churches who seemed to wish the services of a good man and an able minister of Jesus Christ. He was a man of God, thoroughly endowed for every good work; he had been eminently successful as a pastor in some of the most important churches in Maine; he was well nigh the peer of any minister in New England, for intellectual strength, clearness and accuracy of thought,

logical power, soundness in doctrine, and force as a preacher: and yet, among the multitude of churches in Massachusetts and the neighboring states, destitute of pastors, he did not find one that desired his services. Whether the dark Providence that allowed him to meet with such a reception upon his return, and shut him out from his best loved method of work, so far broke the strong spirit within him, as to prostrate his physical energies and invite the development of lurking disease, will, perhaps, never be known here. There can be no doubt that he had a hereditary tendency to consumption, which only waited to be developed by extraordinary circumstances, and that he returned from Illinois in health by no means so vigorous as that with which he went to that State. The facts already stated may have furnished adequate causes for what certainly followed. He persevered in his determination to work in his calling, till April, 1876, when his failing strength compelled him to cease from his public ministrations.

Dr. Wood preached, for the last time, at Manchester, N. H., February 27th, 1876. His text was Acts v. 15: *That at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them;* when his great prostration plainly indicated that his own healing mission to men was nearly done—

> "As lengthening shadows o'er the lawn
> Proclaim the close of day."

From that time he was, for the most part, confined to his home. He struggled with his disease—which clearly was consumption — as he had always struggled against every force which opposed him in his life work. He was hopeful, as he had always been in the darkest hours that had come to him. He had come back to New England with the expectation of spending years in active service for his Master. He could not believe there was no more a place for him upon the whitened fields. He did not know — what proved to be true — that there were in store for him things far better than even his much loved work. Now, those who outlive him can understand it: they can see that only through the long trial of months of failing and disappointment could he have reached the surpassingly blessed ending of life that was granted him; that in that furnace of affliction God was specially calling him; to lay down, one by one, the implements of labor and the weapons of warfare; to be ready to receive the welcome of his Lord; to take the crown of victory and put on the habiliments of immortality, and begin the everlasting service of heaven. He attended divine service, for the last time, with the Temple Church, Boston, Sunday, April 2d, and on that occasion assisted at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and from that day until the end, his sick room was the only sanctuary of the Divine manifestations to his soul.

From this time began a series of ministrations to the failing invalid, which were beautiful illustrations of Christian charity, and which came like balm upon his spirit, made tender by the great trial of being laid aside from his much loved activities. From friends in every church in Maine, of which he had been a pastor, — from Skowhegan, and Waterville, and Lewiston, and especially from Thomaston, — came expressions of loving remembrance, which smoothed the way that otherwise would have been rough indeed, bringing sunshine with them, and which are sure to meet the givers again in the verdict, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

As sometimes a river, just before it enters the sea that waits its coming, turns its eddying currents back towards its source, so his spirit turned to the home of his childhood, and longed for the shade of the spreading elms, and the welcoming embrace of the purple mountains of his native village. Two weeks before his death he went to Camden, Me. He went with the still confident hope that he would there find returning strength. To those best able to form an intelligent judgment, it was evident that he was very near the end. It was not till Sunday, July 30th, that it became apparent that his confidence in returning health was shaken. On that day

he insisted that his sister should tell him his true condition. She intimated her serious fears that he was certainly failing, and asked him what were his own feelings with regard to himself; and how the future looked: "I have," said he, "a strong preference for life: but I am willing the Lord should do as He thinks best. I should like to live to be a comfort to my family, and to do more work for the Master. I have loved my work, and though I have committed errors, yet I *think* grace has been given me, in the main, to be faithful." Until this time he had clung with extraordinary tenacity to life, believing that he would yet live to preach. But it was not any uncertainty with reference to the future — no selfish, worldly clinging to life — that made him seem determined to hold death back. He chose to live that he might "work for the Master." Nevertheless, it was painful to see him — so surely passing away — turning with such a wistful longing toward his lifework on earth. We had not a fear for him when he should get fully away; and we knew that, at the very first step upon the celestial shore, all the attractions of earthly service would be lost — not worthy to be compared to the glory that would be revealed to him. But we longed to have him undo his hold upon earth while still here; and before he got beyond our vision and our hearing, to catch a view of the superlative glories that were awaiting

him; and that the Saviour, whom he so loved to see leading him through toil and suffering here, might even now be revealed to him, as he was waiting for him, to lead him to the many mansions in his Father's house.

And now, on this Sabbath day, came the beginning of the end. The curtain was lifting: he was yielding his grasp upon mortal life, and slowly turning his face toward the shore where were gathering the blessed to receive him.

Monday night was a night of fearful physical suffering. When great drops of agony were on his forehead, he said, "The will of the Lord be done, though it be pain and suffering." On Tuesday noon, having extorted from his physician the conviction that he could live but a few hours, with the calm deliberation which always marked him, he said, "I should like to call my family around me and take my departure." They were called — his wife, and children, and immediate connections. He took the hand of each, and spoke to them words that were "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." He bade his family to wear no weeds of mourning for him after his burial, for they must think of him, not as in darkness and gloom, but in a home of light and joy. Then he prayed his last audible prayer on earth. He said he should soon meet the Saviour and loved ones who were with him, and said, "O, will not that

be a gladsome meeting! I am going home. I have no fears, *for I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Then they read to him the words of Jesus in the 14th and 17th chapters of John, and after this he lay waiting to go. Had he then gone, all of us would have felt that it was a peaceful departure. He was accustomed to say, when in health, that he had little confidence in remarkable experiences on death-beds; that persons of peculiar temperaments might have apparently supernatural experiences and visions that were unreal. On Sunday, he said he did not anticipate any triumphal death for himself — only a peaceful passing away. Ah, how little did he know what his Redeemer was preparing for him on his death-bed! How little did he know, from personal experience, what Jesus could make a dying bed!

On Wednesday, the chariot came for him in the early morning. He exclaimed, "I am now going over the river." "Do you see him?" he asked his daughter.

"Whom?" she enquired.

"The Saviour."

"No — do you?"

"Yes," said he; and he called by name each of a company of the beloved who had gone before, who he believed stood around him. Then, with a distinctness of voice which he had not had for many days, he repeated the verse, "Rock of Ages, cleft

for me;" and when he came to "From thy side a cleansing flood," he repeated it many times. His daughter repeated, "Jesus lover of my soul." "*Sing it*," said he; and as she sang he followed her, repeating every word, and as it was finished, he said, "I can say all that," exclaiming again and again, "Cover my defenceless head!" As he seemed to step into the ascending chariot he said, "I praise God with my latest breath," and with one more audible "*Farewell!*" he went up. In this scene of wonderful beauty and triumph his face was transfigured; the expression of weariness and anxious pain was gone, and the foregleams of the coming glory lighted his face with the radiance of heaven, and his eye shone with the rapture the visions of glory enkindled.

Dr. Wood was buried from the residence of his brother, Hon. Ephraim Wood, in Camden, August 5th, 1876. Prayers were offered by the Rev. Nathaniel Butler, of Bangor, when the family and friends proceeded to the Congregational Church, where more public services were held. The invocation was offered by the Rev. B. S. Arey, of the Methodist Church, and the Scriptures were read by the Rev. S. L. B. Chase, of Rockland. Prayer was offered by the Rev. G. W. Bower, of Camden, and an address delivered by the Rev. Nathaniel Butler. Rev. J. Washburn, of Rockport, now more than ninety years

of age, — the associate of Dr. Wood's father, — paid a touching and eloquent tribute to the man whom he had known in his infancy. After another prayer by the Rev. G. P. Mathews, of Thomaston, and the benediction by the Rev. W. R. Cross, of the Congregational Church, the funeral train proceeded to the cemetery which lies at the foot of Megunticook Mountain, and from whose graves one looks, on one hand, back to the beautiful hills that stretch away to the North, and on the other, out upon the sea, the murmur of whose waves may well seem to be ever sounding the requiem of the quiet sleepers here. At the grave, a brief and tender prayer was offered by the Rev. Joseph Kalloch, of Rockland; and after the singing of the beautiful hymn —

"We shall meet beyond the river
Bye and bye,"—

those who knew him best and loved him most left him, side by side with his little daughter Annie, in that

"Blessed sleep
From which none ever wake to weep."

Thus far, only the most prominent facts in the life of the subject of this memorial have been given. These, as they have been given, are not sufficient to enable one to form a just estimate of the character

of the man. Only an exhaustive biography could do this. The estimate that is now to be given of the character and work of Dr. Wood must, therefore, be accepted, for the most part, as the impressions which his life has made upon one mind; and that, the mind of an intimate friend; but of a friend who has been closely associated with the one he measures, and has witnessed his life in all the phases which it has exhibited, during the period of a generation of men.

That Dr. Wood was a man of unusual intellectual endowments could fairly be inferred from the positions which he has filled, and from his success in them. The subjects he undertook to investigate or to teach he grappled with the strength and skill of a master. In none of these was he ever superficial or weak. He did not traverse the broadest fields of thought; but what he did, he mastered, so far as he did investigate them. He did not gather the wealth of wisdom that other men have in various departments, but what he did gather was *pure gold*. He was a close student in the department of systematic theology, and accurate in his knowledge; and in this department he was strongest, although his general reading was by no means limited.

He had a strength of will that was equal to great labor, and that held him to his purpose, from which nothing could turn him but a conviction that he was

wrong. He was firm as the hills; and when he reached a conviction it was once for all. Vacillation was no quality of his character. When he had occasion to combat an error or false doctrine in theology he never "let up," or cried for quarter. When he assumed a pastorate he went at once to the work *to do something* — to accomplish some success belonging to a pastor's work. He always labored for a season of religious revival and for the conversion of men to God; and when he became convinced of God's willingness to grant that blessing, he set all his energies at work; and he usually saw the attainment of his purpose. In his first pastorate — that at Bloomfield — he evidently had a general religious awakening in view, through many months, and infused into his people his own faith and enthusiasm till the result transcended his own hopes. It was precisely this clinging to a good purpose which distinguished him, that qualified him for the part he had to perform in gathering the ripened harvest at Lewiston. There he found a great religious indifference in the whole community. He began special meetings on the first of January, and after a brief period, becoming convinced that God would pour a great blessing upon the city, he continued his public meetings for most of the time till April — preaching often during every week — standing, in his faith and hope far in advance of others, and inspiring and

leading Christian effort, till it culminated in that most wonderful ingathering of souls. At Upper Alton he undertook what others had refused, and few would have dared, — the building of a church edifice becoming the place; and persisted, — working with axe and shovel in his own hand, and collecting funds, — till the finishing blow was given and the last dollar was paid. In the matter of relieving Shurtleff College from its financial embarrassment, he labored with unabated zeal — remaining when his trusted associates relinquished their posts, and toiled on till his brave heart and weakened body had to yield to impossibilities.

Dr. Wood was a man of great courage. He was absolutely incapable of moral cowardice — never afraid to say and to do anything he believed to be right. Opposition only strengthened his purpose. However this may subject one to the charge of stubbornness, in trivial things, it helps to make him a splendid champion of a principle. On a certain occasion, a delegation from his church, or society, — or from both, — waited upon him, requesting him to change his method of preaching; for his unsparing denunciations of sin were regarded as calculated to alienate rather than to win men to piety. He patiently listened to the representations of his friends, and then informed them that he would answer them, on the next Sunday, from the pulpit.

Accordingly, on the following Sunday he gave his answer. He said, substantially: "I have been requested to modify my method of preaching, so far as to discontinue my denunciations of the wrath of God against sinning men. When I came to this pulpit, I thought I very distinctly announced it as my purpose to declare what I believed to be the whole counsel of God, however it might affect my hearers. It seems that I was not so understood; but that the tastes and opinions of my hearers were to be regarded. Let it then now, and hereafter, be understood that I shall preach the word of God as I believe He has given it, 'whether men will bear or whether they will forbear.'" And he went right on in his own way of preaching.

Dr. Wood was a man of entire integrity. He was eminently conscientious. There are persons who have sensitive consciences, but who rarely obey them. Such are weak, and often bad men. This man obeyed his conscience; and it is not too much to say, he was truth itself in what he said and did. Says the Rev. Dr. Bulkley, of Shurtleff College: "He was the truest man I ever knew." And so others can say; and those who knew him best believe him to have been entirely incapable of uttering an untruth, or of misrepresentation.

He was a man of true charity; not, however, of

the easy and pliant kind which winks at sin or apologizes for wrong. He was severe, and sometimes even harsh — perhaps unnecessarily so — toward what he regarded false in doctrine, or wrong in conduct. He was, at times, in the exhibition of his indignation at wrong, repelling in his manner, and thus impaired his influence in certain directions. But he had that charity that made him catholic in spirit, liberal towards Christians of other denominations, and a true yoke-fellow with all good men, in all beneficent labor: so that he numbered among his warmest friends men who differed essentially with him in matters of religious belief. He was slow to believe evil of others; and evil speaking found little favor with him. I cannot recall the instance during an acquaintance of thirty-five years in which he trifled with the reputation of one of his brethren; and if the emotion of jealousy was known to him, he did not exhibit it. He heartily rejoiced in the success of his brethren. He was a friend that never forgot or betrayed the friendship of another.

Dr. Wood was a man of deep and sincere piety. He had been a wayward and sinful boy; and just previous to his remarkable experience in college, when he became a penitent and returning prodigal, he was, apparently, rapidly settling himself in ways of fatal departure from God; but his life, subsequently, was that of a true and humble Christian.

What remains of any diary or journal that he kept shows that, for many years, he observed one day in every month as a fast day, when he gave himself to devotional exercises — especially to self-examination and prayer. In seasons of special religious interest among his people, he was to them an example of faith, and hope, and persevering prayer — infusing into them his own spirit of devotion. It is not always true, at such seasons, that the pastor represents the spiritual power of the work. His preaching and his executive tact may make him indispensable to such a movement; but the prayer, the faith, the unseen inspiration are often through others than preachers or pastors. Dr. Wood was as strong in these as in his preaching, and marched in front of the sacramental host he nominally led. He had, by nature, the keenest appreciation of wit, and possessed no small share of it himself, but was rarely led to indiscretion in word or conduct. He was constitutionally impatient and restive under restraint, but he learned so much of self-control as to become eminently a patient and quiet man. During one period he and his friends believed himself to be the subject of injustice and misapprehension; but in it all he uttered no words which he could justly be asked to recall; and near the close of his life he marked whatever record he had kept of this painful passage "to be destroyed" — and it was destroyed.

Through such scenes he exhibited the noble bearing of a man who could show

> "How sublime a thing it is
> To suffer and be strong."

With the endowments which Dr. Wood possessed there were qualifications to his character which undoubtedly rendered him less effective, as a Christian minister, than he otherwise would have been. To those not intimate with him there was an air of distant coldness — a lack of the warm, magnetic sympathy that quickly attracts and attaches men to one. Had he been moulded, in this respect, to a different form, with warmer impulses, he would have been a commanding leader among men. He had few attractive elements, in form or features, or manner. He used to tell, with great good humor, the following incident: He was once walking, on Lisbon Street, in Lewiston, and stopping at a photographer's saloon, he stood, unobserved, behind two ladies who were looking at some photographs, hanging at the window. "Look," said one of them to her companion, "Look at this! Here is the homeliest man I ever saw." Dr. Wood looked over her shoulder and saw her finger pointing at his own picture.

But if, to any, "his bodily presence was weak," they had only to hear him, when, with his masterly logic, he vindicated the word of God, or with irresis-

tible conviction appealed to the consciences of men, to realize that there was in him something "weighty and powerful." On his first appearance, in the pulpit of a church, when he was a candidate for settlement, he came with one whose commanding presence always attracted notice. Alluding to Dr. Wood, a prominent man in the congregation asked, "Who is that man?" "Wait a little," said his friend, "and you will see." Before Dr. Wood had finished his sermon, the inquisitive man was prepared to call him a pastor.

As a preacher, Dr. Wood was what his intellectual characteristics would lead us to expect. At an early period in his public life he took high rank among strong and able preachers, and maintained this position to the close.

His was not that cast of logical mind that best exhibits itself in the investigation and accumulation of facts and data; but, having his premises given him, or having assumed them, he went straight on to their legitimate conclusions, with directness, accuracy and force. In his more carefully written productions, it was nearly impossible for his readers or hearers — if they followed him — to resist his conclusions.

His views of theological truth were clear, and in his preaching he was equally clear — with no waste

of words, and no ambiguity. He came directly to his subject, and went to the point to be made by the shortest line. A description by Tennyson is true of Dr. Wood:

> "When one would aim an arrow fair
> But send it slackly from the string;
> And one would pierce an outer ring,
> And one an inner, here and there:
> And last the master bowman, he
> Would cleave the mark."

His system of Christian doctrine had no excrescences or distortions — it was full grown and symmetrical. In all and in every part of it, he regarded the Word of God as the ultimate source of appeal, and accepted nothing for which he could not find clear authority in that Word. His theology was regarded as thoroughly evangelical. His peculiar mental habits gave him great force in the presentation of the Divine Law, especially with reference to sin and redemption. Here he wielded a weapon of terrible weight, and sometimes with fearful effect. Wherever he saw the penalties of the Law would fall, he dealt his blows with unerring and unsparing precision; and while indicating that Law, he knew nothing of mercy, and took nothing from its weight or its edge by confusing justice with compassion. He could concentrate his whole power of thought upon his subject and hold his hearers to it; and so

when he was dealing with sin and the sinner, and arraigning him for his transgression, and uncovering his guilt before the spotless purity of God, there was, at times, something awful in the manner in which he would demonstrate that guilt, and hang the terrible condemnation above a sinner's head. His appeals to the conscience were overwhelmingly convincing, and left a sinning man no alternative but immediate and unconditional submission to God. His views of the atonement were clear and effective, and he loved to preach Christ as the sinner's friend; but the schoolmaster he chiefly employed to bring him to Christ was the Law. Consequently, that very large class — such minds as are at once repelled by denunciation — were not controlled by him; but a very large class — such as needed to be aroused by a shock that would move their entire being — were arrested by his faithful and pungent appeals, and multitudes were saved by his words.

Dr. Wood was not what is known as *a popular preacher*. He had not the personal magnetism which is indispensable for such an one; and there must be added to this — what has already been noticed — his denunciatory method in preaching. To appreciate and understand him fully it was necessary to become familiar with his method. Only in exceptional instances would he make his best impression upon one hearing him for the first time.

Perhaps, too, he required of his hearers a depth of thought and a closeness of attention that the popular mind was not willing, in his day, to give. The food he provided was meat too strong; and the religious dyspepsia of the times rejected this for lighter and less substantial food. It can be affirmed with strict truth that, among all the sermons he preached, and all the productions of his pen which he gave to the public, during his ministry of almost thirty years, there was not one that could be characterized as weak, or trivial, or barren of thought. The judgment of Professor O. L. Castle, of Shurtleff College, would, doubtless, be that of every one of Dr. Wood's critical hearers: "He never preached a sermon while with us — a period of six years — that was not more than an ordinary production." He was a preacher whom scholars heard with delight, and one by whom the Church of God was defended and strengthened, and lost men were saved.

It would be a grateful and an easy task to extend this Memorial beyond the limits which have been contemplated in this instance; but however extended it might be made, the sum of it would be that of a Christian life of large success, and of a character of great excellence.

Dr. Wood began his life in comparative obscurity, and by the force of his character won a name among

the best men of his denomination. He was one of the staunchest champions of evangelical truth, and was, it is believed, never the defeated party in any contest for the truth he defended. He was a successful pastor, serving, as such, four of the prominent churches in Maine, and one in Illinois — two of these being churches immediately connected with Baptist colleges. In all these he was instrumental in gathering large numbers into the churches—many of them being students in the colleges, and not a few of the latter becoming ministers of the Gospel. And, above all and sanctifying all, was this — he was a devout Christian, an unassuming servant of Christ, a man of faith and of much prayer, and an honor to the Church of Christ — stainless in his character, and true to the last. "The last of earth" for him was singularly characteristic of all his life, which was one of earnest effort and often painful struggling,— a life in which he held the attitude of one tenaciously clinging to his course of dutiful labor — of one who was never in haste to give up a good and cherished purpose. In just this manner he passed through the final scene of earthly struggling. He clung to service till a stronger hand than his own undid his hold upon the plow to which he had put his hand. Some of his last hours were like so many in his life — hours of suffering; but they had their ending, like many other passages in his life, in

supreme triumph — just such as a battle-worn warrior should have. His last night was one of feverish restlessness;

> "But when the sun, in all his state,
> Illumed the eastern skies,
> He passed through glory's morning gate,
> And walked in Paradise."

And while he goes on in the eternal service and praise before the throne of God, and the following of the Lamb, and the never hungering, never thirsting, tearless, dwelling with the Father, we will remember how he lived, and how he labored, and follow on to our time, in the way of earthly toil for God.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE CHRISTIAN ALTERNATIVE: JESUS THE MESSIAH, OR JESUS THE IMPOSTOR.

SOME SAID, HE IS A GOOD MAN: OTHERS SAID, NAY; BUT HE DECEIVETH THE PEOPLE.—JOHN VII. 12.

There could be no neutral ground between these parties. It was necessary to take the position, either that Jesus was all he claimed to be, and a good man, or that he was a deceiver and a bad man. There was very much of too positive a character in his pretensions to allow of any other conclusion. So clear, so full, so explicit were his teachings and claims, that his hearers could find no consistent course, save to receive him unreservedly or to reject him utterly.

The same necessity is upon us.

All those compromises by which men have sought to adjust their favorite views to the character and teachings of Jesus, or rather, in which they have sought to adjust his character and teachings to their views, are vain. He has presented himself before

the world in too positive a light, and has spoken of his relations to God and man in terms too positive, to allow other alternative than that of cordially receiving him, and yielding implicit assent to his teachings, as infallible truth, or of utterly rejecting him as an impostor. An impostor is one who makes pretension to character and authority to which he has no rightful claim; one who teaches for truth what he knows to be falsehood. Whether these claims or doctrines are set forth in direct language, or are the legitimate inferences from the individual's acts and words, it matters not; if they are false, he is an impostor. The Jews accused Jesus of being a deceiver. It is proposed to notice some of his claims and teachings which must be accepted as divine truth, if we would not assent to the justice of this accusation. That Jesus knew what his own character was, and what his relations to man and God were; that he had clear views of what he taught for the truth; and that he knew perfectly what impressions his words and deeds were fitted to give and did give, we may safely assume.

If he did give false impressions of his character, or teach false doctrines, directly or indirectly, he did so knowingly, purposely, and is justly chargeable with deception. We present then the alternative.

1. *Was Jesus the Messiah, of whose coming and character, through nearly a score of centuries, prophets spake, or was he an impostor?* Respecting his own teachings and pretensions we do not admit that there can be doubt in the mind of a candid reader of the gospel narrative. Jesus did not discourse like a

Kant, a Hamilton, or a Cousin, to philosophers in a philosophical style, which only a philosophical mind can comprehend; nor did he speak to persons who were accustomed, like German mythical interpreters, to look for a hidden, curious, fanciful meaning in every sentence; but he spoke chiefly to the plain, unlettered multitude, the common people who heard him gladly, and who, he knew, would take the most obvious meaning of his words for the true one, and would neither suspect nor hunt for uncommon interpretations. We may assume as a general rule, that the ideas which common readers get from an unbiased perusal of his words are the ideas he meant to convey. We repeat, then, no honest man can fail to understand his claims.

He declared himself the Messiah of the prophets. Of John the Baptist, his forerunner, who announced himself "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"— thus claiming the ancient prophecy — Jesus also added his testimony, saying to the multitudes, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee." When Jesus demanded of his disciples whom they took him to be, Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Jesus approved his saying. To the Jews he said, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." And, again — "Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." Again he declares — "All things

written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished." "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me." When challenged by the high priest to answer whether he were the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, he answered "I am." To the two going to Emmaus, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Thus plainly did he announce himself as Messiah; and of his extraordinary character and relations to God and man he gave equally clear teachings. "A greater than Solomon is here," said he on one occasion. On another, when he had been speaking of his character and works, the cavillers exclaimed, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets that are dead? whom makest thou thyself?" — he plainly signified his superiority to them all, concluding by the extraordinary assertion: "Before Abraham was, I am."

He declared himself to be the "only begotten Son of God," whom he gave, that those believing on him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Emphatically did he announce his own preëxistence in a past eternity. "And now," are the words of his prayer, "O Father, glorify thou me, with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was." He claimed to be the only one that could reveal the Father, and because of his peculiar relations to him; "No one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father but the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

He taught that he was himself the only medium of access to the Father. "No man cometh to the Father but by me." Such power too he claimed as none other ever did. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Thus might we proceed with the particulars concerning the extraordinary character and relations to which he made pretension, for every reader of gospel history knows that they are found on every page of the sacred narrative.

We know that he did claim directly, and allowed the inference to be drawn from his acts and words by his disciples and the multitudes, that he was the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and that as such he was above and unlike all other men, the infallible Teacher, the Supreme Lord of all. The alternative is forced upon us, either to admit the truth and justice of this claim, or to charge him with wicked imposture. In no way can we compromise the matter, and leave him in possession of a character of virtue, honesty, or veracity, if we deny these claims.

Do the Parkers, Newmans, Renans, say, "He is a good man, a very superior man, but nothing more, — possessed of no power, authority, knowledge or relations beyond what other holy men may possibly attain?" We reply, "Nay, he deceiveth the people," — he cannot be a good man. He claims to be Messiah, to have existed before creation, to have all power, and many other like things. If he did live in glory with the Father before the world was, he knows it; if he did not dwell thus with the Father in glory he knows it, and knows all the rest of his claims

associated with this false one to be false also; and he is thus made out an arrant impostor. Tell us not he is a good man if you deny him the character and relations he claims. All our ideas of righteousness must be reversed, ere we can admit it. With far greater propriety may you tell us that Mahomet was a good man, for he never laid claim to such a character and to such power as Christ. We can find good ground for adopting the theory that he was a religious enthusiast, misled by his spiritual fancies and dreams, and still retain some respect for his character; for he did not profess to speak on his own high authority, but as he was taught by the angel of the Cave; nor did he pretend to work miracles in confirmation of his prophetic character, but appealed to his visions and revelations.

Jesus, on the contrary, spake as one that had authority and infallibility, not derived but inherent, — belonging to him by virtue of his relation to the Supreme God. "I am in the Father and the Father in me." In proof of this he wrought, or pretended to work, the many mighty miracles of which the record is in the gospels. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not," was his challenge to his foes; "but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him." And at the close of his career of miraculous working, he declared of his rejectors, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." This was their especial guilt, that they

had rejected him, notwithstanding his mighty miracles wrought before them in confirmation of his Messiahship.

Surely the men of our day, who deny Christ's claim to infallible authority, and denounce as fabulous the miraculous working given in confirmation of it, must be gifted with the knowledge of a spiritual alchemy in itself miraculous, which can discover in him still a character honest, just and true. This is, indeed, light shining out of darkness, — or rather it is darkness itself shining. We leave this point.

2. *Was Jesus divine, or was he an impostor?*

When God made known himself to Moses, he used this language: "I am that I am," and bade him declare to the Hebrews in Egyptian bondage, "I AM hath sent me unto you." When Jesus replied to the cavilling Jews concerning his character and authority he used this title, by which Jehovah would be known, saying: "Before Abraham was I am." What idea must the Jews have attached to these sacred terms by which Jehovah had declared his self-existent Godhead to their great captain and prophet? and how must they have regarded the claims of one who thus boldly applied them to himself? We will not dwell on this.

In the commencement of this article, it was remarked, that he who willingly allows to be attributed to himself a character that does not rightfully belong to him, is as justly branded a deceiver as he who positively claims it. How was it with Jesus? In the early part of his public ministry, he chose twelve disciples whom he admitted to the closest intimacy

and most unreserved intercourse. He instructed them continually in respect to his own character and relations, and both before and after his death and resurrection made known to them the important things of his kingdom. Once he asked his disciples, "Who say ye that I am?"— and Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Christ did not make any correction of this answer, but replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." At another time he talked with them familiarly and tenderly of the Father, and Philip said unto him, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." Christ replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, show us the Father?"

The context in which these words occur strengthens the conviction that the natural interpretation is the correct one, and that Jesus intended to claim divinity by the use of them. Conceive of Peter in the house of Cornelius, or Paul upon Mars Hill, or John among his "little children" at Ephesus saying, "He that sees me sees God;" and would not the language be blasphemy upon their lips?

We are not surprised, that after the miracle of the resurrection — the accomplishment of which by his own power Jesus foretold to his disciples — had been fully proved to the doubting Thomas, he should yield to overwhelming evidence and announce his faith, in the words, "My Lord and my God." But

we are astonished out of measure that Jesus did not correct the error, if it was not his desire that his disciples should regard him as their Lord and their God. He surely knew what ideas of his divine character his disciples were receiving, and he surely knew that his words were fitted to confirm them in their belief. He taught them that he and his Father were one, and promised when he departed to send the divine Spirit to abide with them and guide them into truth. "He shall take of the things of mine and show them unto you." He assured them that all power in heaven and earth was his, and commanded them to go and proclaim the gospel in his name, and baptize the converts in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The Father is God; the Holy Ghost is God; and is the Son, whose name is thus associated on equal terms with these divine names, less than God? He bade them offer their prayers in his name, with the assurance that he would answer and that the Father would answer; thus placing himself on an equality with God as the hearer of prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name I will do it." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you."

He promised to be with them alway even unto the end of the world; thus assuming omnipresence, as before he had asserted his omnipotence. Now, if these disciples believed that Jesus spoke the truth, and that he did possess all these attributes to which he laid claim directly and assumed indirectly in these teachings and promises, and which he allowed

others to ascribe to him without contradiction, what inference might we expect them to draw?

What inference they did draw, we well know; for what doctrine they subsequently taught, we know. Peter, who answered Christ's question, "Who say ye that I am?" has shown us what he received as the truth, for in his epistle he has styled him "God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;"[1] and John, the beloved, who surely drank in from his Master the pure truth, in the beginning of his gospel declares, "In the beginning was the Word (Christ), and the Word (Christ) was with God, and the Word (Christ) was God."

With emphasis says he again, "This is the true God and eternal life." Had not Jesus reason to expect that such would be the inference of his disciples from his acts and words? That his language was capable of such construction he certainly knew, and that his disciples had heard such inference drawn from his words he also knew. John records that on two occasions, the Jews understood him to claim divinity and accused him of blasphemy because of it, saying once, "Thou being man makest thyself God," and again, that "he made himself equal with God." And yet he never cautioned his disciples against such inference. He never told them to beware of the error of attributing to him divinity. He bade them "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees," but never did he say, "Take heed and beware of idolatry in paying to me

[1] In the Bible Union's Version, and also in marginal reference of Common Version, "Our God and Saviour Jesus Christ."

honor that belongs only to God." On the contrary, he did emphatically declare it to be "the will of the Father that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Never did he refuse the worship offered him, nor give the slightest caution to those disciples, to hinder them and his church, through all succeeding time, from falling into the fatal error of paying him divine homage, and thus breaking Jehovah's first great command. If Christ was not divine, and yet allowed his disciples under his own instruction to embrace this error, was he not a deceiver? If he knew the future history of his church, and saw that universally, through succeeding centuries, the false doctrines of his divinity, which his rejectors charged him with assuming, would be received from his own words, and still uttered not one clear positive warning to keep his church from this idolatry, how can we reconcile it with a character of truth and righteousness? And surely the known fact that the wisest, and best, and most ardently devoted of his disciples, have, with such unanimity, through eighteen centuries, inferred from his teachings this doctrine, is of itself an overwhelming proof that it is a most natural inference, and an inference so natural, that, if false, one so wise as Christ claimed to be ought to have foreseen and provided against it by some word of caution.

He foresaw and predicted that men would dislike his truth; he foresaw and predicted that multitudes would refuse the honor due to him; he foresaw and predicted that they would array themselves in hostility against his people, and pursue them with perse-

cuting rage; he foresaw and predicted that many of his professed followers would fall away and forsake him; but nowhere do we see manifested on his part the least suspicion that his disciples would ever be in danger of paying him too much honor, or that his church would ever fall into the sin of idolatry by offering him the worship due to God alone. Tell us, denier of Christ's divinity, Was he ignorant or was he perverse?

We have alluded to the inference of the unfriendly Jews. Let us look a little more closely, and we shall see — if this was a false inference — how forcibly ought the necessity of cautioning his disciples to have presented itself to his mind, if he would secure them from idolatry.

On one occasion Jesus had said, "I and my Father are one;" and the Jews for this sought to slay him. "Many good works," said Jesus, "have I shown you of my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" Their answer was, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because thou being a man makest thyself God." Again, they sought to slay him because he had done a miracle on the Sabbath day. Jesus answered them, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he had not only broken the Sabbath, but said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." From these accounts it is manifest that calling God his Father, or calling himself the Son of God, was deemed, by these enemies, equivalent to a claim of divinity.

Bearing this in mind, let us look upon the scene

before the Sanhedrim. After they had sought in vain for evidence against him, and were almost in despair of accomplishing their purpose to condemn him, the high priest stands up and puts Christ under a solemn oath, saying. "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of the living God." Thus adjured, Jesus replied, "I am," and added the declaration that hereafter they should see him coming in his power and glory. Thereupon the high priest rent his clothes, saying, "He hath spoken blasphemy," and the council gave their voice, "He is guilty of death." The law of Moses denounced death upon the blasphemer, and urging Pilate to give sentence against him, they said, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."[1] Now as we have seen that Jesus knew what meaning, on previous occasions, his enemies attached to the phrase "Son of God," can we doubt that he intentionally allowed them to understand him to claim divinity? Answering the question according to the known meaning of the questioner, did he not positively affirm his divinity? And if he was not divine, how can the justice of the sentence be im-

[1] It is a noteworthy fact that John, who makes record of the two occasions when the Jews accused Jesus of claiming divinity, is the only evangelist who gives this accusation before Pilate. And when we reflect how his mind must have been impressed with these facts; that he had heard Jesus charged with making such claim; that he had heard him under adjuration acknowledge and avow the claim; that he had seen him condemned to death on the charge of such claim, and had heard the justice of the verdict asserted by his judges before Pilate, we are not surprised at the opening sentence of his Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

pugned which according to the law of Moses condemned him to death? And how can we find fault with the epithet which they afterward applied to him —"this deceiver."

But if the enemies of Jesus drew a false inference from his words, how could he help to see the necessity of cautioning his disciples, if he would not have them fall into the same error? Yet he uttered not a syllable of caution.

We say then, if Jesus was willing that both friends and enemies should understand him to claim divinity, and yet was not divine, he was a deceiver, such as beside him the world has never known. We are fully aware of the startling nature of this alternative; but there it is and we must meet it — Jesus divine, or Jesus an impostor!

3. *Is Jesus the only one through whom men can be saved from their sins, or has he deceived the world in this vital matter?*

What he taught is manifest. He did claim to be the Saviour of men. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." He taught that such is the character of the race through sin that, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;" that God, looking on the condition of sinners was moved with compassion, and "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." So, in his estimation, the world was lost and needed him for a Saviour. There are those who speak of Jesus in the highest terms of praise as a good man and a great

teacher, but ignore entirely his peculiar relations as a Saviour. Such go in the face of his own words. He did most emphatically teach, in the fullest, clearest, most positive terms, that he was necessary to the redemption of the world, and that it could not be saved without him.

"I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved." "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am come that men might have life." In such a strain did he constantly speak, ever teaching that the hope and dependence of the world for salvation was in him, and warning men to make sure of life by believing in him. "Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you." "Whosoever drinketh the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." From these multiplied teachings what could his disciples learn but this? — that he was the only Saviour from sin, and they only could expect salvation who should receive him. Let any one read carefully all his teachings to the twelve — especially those recorded in the latter chapters of John, where he sets forth the closeness of relationship between

himself and his disciples, tells of the benefits he does and will confer upon them, speaks of the sacrifice he is to offer for them and its necessity, and points them to the blessed mansions of rest which he will, in his love and by his own power, prepare for them — and he will see the reasons they had to believe that Jesus was their Saviour.

And when, as they stood on Mt. Olivet, whence he ascended on high, they received from his lips the last great commission, which bade them go into all the world and to every creature proclaim that whosoever believed in him should be saved, and whosoever believed not in him should be damned, how completely must they have been confirmed in the belief that salvation was in him alone. That they were fixed in this belief, we have abundant evidence. When the day of Pentecost came and they went forth under the guidance of the divine Spirit to preach to the multitude, this was the doctrine they proclaimed. When the thousands pricked in the heart began to tremble in view of their lost condition, and to cry out to Peter and the rest of the apostles — "What shall we do?" — the answer was ready, and was given in no hesitating uncertain language, but in clear decided terms — "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." And when subsequently Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrim for preaching in the name of Jesus, they there made confession of their faith, declaring him to be the Saviour: "Neither is there salvation in

any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." This they ever taught: "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." It appears thus that the words of Jesus were calculated to convey to his hearers the idea that the world was lost in sin, and he only could save it; and this was the idea they did receive, and Jesus knew this to be the idea they received; nor may we question that this was the idea he meant they should receive. Unless it be the truth, that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of the world, and without him there is no hope to the guilty sons of men, we must set him down as the great impostor of history.

4. *Is the death of Jesus necessary in order to provide a deliverance from the curse of the law for those who trust in him, or has he deceived the world, in this respect?*

"We are saved by Christ's life and teaching, by imitating his example, by obeying his precepts, not by his vicarious suffering. We need no atonement to deliver us from penalties. Penitence and reformation will secure pardon." Are these true statements? That we cannot be saved without renouncing sin — without striving to conform to the precepts and example of Christ — is true, and on this would we lay great emphasis; but is this all?

Is there no penalty for past transgression to be remitted, which could not be remitted had not Christ died for our sins and risen again for our justification? Was it not a necessity that he should suffer, the just

for the unjust, that sinners might have pardon, that God might be just and the justifier of those that believe in him? If this be not so, then we see no way to avoid the conclusion that Jesus has deceived us. His teachings seem not equivocal, nor did his hearers so regard them, especially the chosen disciples who in their writings have given us the impressions they received. It is recorded, by John, that a Rabbi came to Jesus, on one occasion, to inquire concerning his doctrine. Jesus began by declaring to him the absolute necessity of the great moral change of the new birth, the work of the divine Spirit. Then, proceeding to speak of himself and his mission, he declares his advent from heaven and makes known its necessity for the salvation of men. And to illustrate his relation to men as their Saviour, he uses the following language: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." He presents himself on the cross, holding such relation to guilty men, as the brazen serpent held to the poisoned Israelites. As they looked and lived, or refusing died, so must men look to Christ on the cross for salvation from sin, or refusing die eternally. If Jesus does not mean here to present himself on the cross as the only hope of the world, if he does not teach that in this vicarious sacrifice is the great love of God seen providing sal-

vation, then may we cease to trust language for the conveyance of ideas. And what mean these words of his?—"The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "To give his life." How did Jesus give his life? By the death on Calvary. "A ransom for many." And was that a ransom? So he declares. And what is a ransom? A price paid to deliver some one from thraldom, from penalties, from suffering. Jesus then gave his life as a price for the redemption of man from the penalty of sin. "I lay down my life for the sheep; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." No wonder that his disciples, with such language of their Master in their remembrance, should find a fitness in the address of the apostle,—"Ye are bought with a price." No wonder that Peter should declare, "Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

Frequently did Jesus converse with his chosen twelve concerning his death, and most plainly did he make known its necessity, but never more clearly and tenderly than on the night of his betrayal. The scenes of the Last Supper and of Gethsemane can be rationally interpreted only by the doctrine of a vicarious atonement. As we have looked upon the scene of Jesus in the garden, and have seen him there alone on his bended knees beneath those dark olives, praying, "O my father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and have contemplated his

passion, his soul in agony, his physical frame bowed in the extremity of suffering, his holy brow weeping as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, in view of the cross, involuntarily has the exclamation arisen, what a protest is here against the saying of many that his death was that of a martyr only, not necessary for the salvation of men! Must we acquiesce in the conclusion of Parker, that Jesus gave way to weakness here, and exhibited a lack of that fortitude shown by many of his own confessors, who without shrinking have met death in like form and in forms as terrible, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer in his name? No; Jesus was not weak, nor did his imagination invest that cross with an agony greater than belonged to it. It was not the giving of his life only, but the giving of his life a ransom for many, the view of which extorted from his soul those cries of anguish.

Jesus saw clearly and appreciated fully what to us is an infinite mystery of vicarious suffering, in that death to which in anticipation he submitted with the prayer, "O my father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." He saw it was not possible to fulfil his great mission of love and let this cup pass from him.

Had he not drank that cup, how entirely that precious ordinance, which a few hours before he had instituted, would have lost all its significance! "With desire," said he to the twelve, "have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Christ himself

was the paschal lamb, in whose slaying the type was about to be fulfilled. In such a strain was he addressing them. Then, "he took bread, blessed and brake it, and gave to his disciples, and said, 'Take, eat, this is my body.' And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Was there no emphatic vicarious value in that death, thus to be commemorated throughout the history of the church by this ordinance? Why did he mark this of all the events of his earthly mission, alone to be kept in lively remembrance among his disciples by a special commemorative ceremony? How must those apostles have viewed it afterwards, when, calling to mind his many teachings concerning the necessity of his death, they partook of these emblems of it and repeated the words—"This is my body given for you:" "This cup is the New Testament in my blood shed for you?" Did these disciples from that time, never look with peculiar interest to that blood, nor feel that it was indeed shed for them, to take away their sin? What Peter believed we have seen in his words already quoted. How the beloved John, who at this supper leaned on Jesus' breast, received his words, we know by this subsequent declaration—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." If these apostles did not, at that very hour, fully comprehend his words and acts, they afterwards did. After his resurrection, he appeared to them and said, "These

are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures," and said unto them, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things." And so have they been witnesses of these things, and have taught in unmistakable language what they learned from their Lord. "For," saith Peter, "Christ hath once suffered for sins the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God." "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed." Who bare our sins? Jesus Christ. How? In his body. Where? On the tree. To what end? That we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness, that by his stripes we might be healed. In Peter's estimation, the cross is man's only hope. Can we blame him for drawing such an inference from such teachings of his Master? And when John, in his vision, heard the song of the redeemed in heaven—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever"—he did not hesitate to record it as setting forth the true

value of Christ's death; and why should he, after listening to such words from his lips? When Paul takes up the word and declares, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," we know from what teaching of Jesus he drew such conclusions. And when we know that the church through all the centuries has held "the cross, the cross, ever the cross," to be the grand feature of the gospel, fitted to attract the attention, to fix the regards, to give hope, to draw out the trust and affections of believers, we can see plainly from whose blessed lips they have received instruction. To the opposer of this great doctrine of Christ's vicarious suffering, we will not now dogmatically declare — it is true and you must receive it; but we will fearlessly assert that if it be not true, then the apostles of the Lord, the early disciples, and the vast multitudes of Christ's true, faithful followers, through the long line of centuries, have been deceived, and the plain teaching of Jesus has deceived them, and you may choose your alternative. Do you say, "he is a good man, but his death has no vicarious value?" "Nay," is our response, "but he deceiveth the people." He has deceived me — he has deceived my brother and my sister — he has deceived the multitudes who during the pentecostal outpourings of the past years have put their trust in him and found peace — he has deceived the churches throughout Christendom which are now placing their hopes upon that death — he has deceived the myriads who through generations past have drawn their hopes of heaven, their motives to holy endeavor,

their power to triumph over trial and death from the cross — he has deceived his apostles; for to us all has he said, as, again and again, in obedience to his own command, we have come around his table to commemorate his suffering and death, — "This is my body given for you" — "This cup is the New Testament in my blood shed for many for the remission of sins."

If we have believed a lie Jesus Christ has taught it to us.

5. *Has Jesus power to forgive sins, so that his word of promise, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," is sufficient to secure salvation to every one that trusts in it, or is he an impostor?*

That he claimed this power is manifest. Once he said to the sick of the palsy, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee:" and when the bystanders murmured, saying, "Who hath power to forgive sins but God only?" he demonstrated his rightful claim to such power by working a miracle before them, bidding the sick of the palsy to arise, take up his bed and go to his own house, and giving him strength to obey. To the woman in the Pharisee's house he said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;" and when they murmured he added, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Can one rightfully use such language, in whom dwells not the prerogative to forgive sin and grant salvation?

To his chosen disciples he ever spoke as one who had power and authority to do for them whatever they needed; and when about to leave them, he addressed to them words fitted to heighten their confidence in his ability and love, to the utmost. "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in ME. In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." The perfect confidence thus challenged, the apostles ever exercised, ascribing to him forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. If now Jesus is a mere man, and has not the power which he has so positively claimed, and which his apostles led by his teaching have ascribed to him, then has he been guilty of the most infamous imposture of which the human mind is capable of conceiving. It is the veriest folly to pretend to have respect for a character such as his is made to appear, for he has been guilty of a double crime against humanity and against God, which no creature beside, either man or spirit, has ever equalled.

Upon the man Tetzel with his merchandise of popish pardons and indulgences, we can waste no deeper feeling than contempt, — his employers we indignantly condemn, and his poor ignorant victims we both pity and despise; but of the deception of this man Jesus if *only* a man human speech can convey no conception, or of the intensity of the soul's emotions as we view it. The wisest and the weakest, the most learned and the most ignorant, the noble and the serf, every grade of intellect from a giant Paul to a semi-idiot, through three-score generations of men,

have been his victims. He has spoken to millions of souls under the deepest agony of conviction for sin, and in the most exultant joy of a supposed deliverance, in hours of adversity, severest trial, utmost peril, and in hours of prosperity, bliss and safety, in quiet congregations of peaceful worshippers, and amidst the martyr fires, in "all the changing scenes of life," and in the last struggles of death, saying, "Come unto me, believe in me, I can and will forgive and save," and his voice has sounded like the voice of a God mighty to save; but it has been the voice of a weak, deceitful man, deluding its victims to the belief in a falsehood whose consequences are eternal, by the blasphemous usurpation of the supreme prerogative of Deity. Do you shudder at the application of such language to Christ? It is the Christian alternative.

6. *Did Jesus rise from the dead on the third day and ascend into heaven, and is he now our Mediator on high, or is he a deceiver?*

That he predicted his own death, that he declared he had power to lay down his life and take it again, and would do so; that he was crucified and laid in the sepulchre, are matters of historic record; that he appeared afterwards alive, at least ten different times to his disciples, talked with them, ate before them, bade them test him by touch as well as sight, gave them their commission, and promised to be with them always in their labors, these his disciples positively assert. That he spoke to his disciples of ascending to his Father, both before and after his resurrection, that he taught them to expect that in

his glory he would still be their Saviour and would hear and answer their prayers, and that from among them he was caught up and passed out of their sight, they have testified in the most explicit language.

Were all these appearances real, and all these words and promises true and sure, or mere deceptions in word and deed? This is a question to be fairly met, by those who would rightly and honestly decide upon the character of Jesus Christ, not to be disposed of by a fling or a sneer, as Theodore Parker disposes of the resurrection on the third day. These pretensions are either true or false. If true, they establish the character of Jesus as the Lord of life and death, the ascended and glorified Redeemer, who ever lives a Mediator at the right hand of the Father, to hear and answer the prayers of his people.

If false, then is his character stamped as that of a sorcerer, an impostor, whom we ought to reject with scorn.

7. *Finally, is there to be a resurrection of the dead and a day of judgment, when Jesus Christ will assign to all their reward, and receive his saints into the glory of the Father, or is he a deceiver?*

It was his positive declaration, that the Father had committed all judgment unto the Son; and he often warned his hearers of the approach of that day when all deeds should be tried and rewarded. "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken the same shall judge him in the last day." Most fearful language this to the denier of his truth and his

claims; the very word that he rejects shall judge him. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father and of the holy angels." "For the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Of Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, he declared the sentence should be less tolerable, in the day of judgment, than of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah. In that day, many, he also declared, will say unto him, "Lord, Lord,"—to whom he will reply, "I never knew you; depart, ye that work iniquity." He has given a most graphic description of that great scene, when, seated on the throne of his glory, all nations shall be gathered before him and he shall divide them as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and to each party shall assign an everlasting portion. Let it be kept distinctly in mind that Jesus spoke to a people who were believers in the doctrine of a final judgment, and what impression are we compelled to acknowledge his words fitted to leave? What ideas were received by his own apostles they make plain by their own language. Peter speaks plainly of the judgment, telling us that the angels that sinned and the unjust are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished. So also Jude; and John in the Apocalypse describes the scene when all that have lived shall be gathered,

and the books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of the things written in the books. And Paul, taught by Christ, has positively affirmed the coming of that judgment. "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." The same inference that these apostles drew has the church ever drawn from Christ's words, and with faith in those teachings we who believe do now look forward with awe and hope, to that day when "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Has Jesus deceived us all in this great matter and awakened idle fears in the minds of men these many centuries, or is it indeed true that that day is coming "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Here is an alternative which the Christian offers. Deny the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment, and Jesus Christ stands forth a deceiver.

In our discussion, we have swept over a wide range of Christian doctrines, and made copious quotations from the Holy Word. We could not confine ourselves to a narrower compass and do justice to the design we have had in view—that of exhibiting the alternative with which, as a believer in evangelical truth, we would meet the liberalists of every school who eulogize the character of Jesus,

while they ignore his divine claims and deny the fundamental doctrines he taught. "What think ye of Christ?" is the question of vital importance.

No systems of religious belief or doctrine can now be set up without taking Christ into the account. His history and teaching cannot be ignored. Whoever would reject evangelical truth and adopt another creed, must modify his views of Christ to accord therewith. This we observe to be practically the truth, and various have been the characters and relations assigned to Christ by the believers and advocates of false creeds. Our object has been to expose the inconsistency of this with the plain gospel narrative. Jesus has presented himself to us in no equivocal light. His claims in respect to character and relations are put forth in such positive and decided terms, and under such circumstances as to leave no doubt how he would be regarded.

We must receive him precisely as he presents himself, acknowledging the justice of his claims to all that is extraordinary in this character and these relations, and accepting as truth all his teachings; or we must renounce him utterly as an impostor, who has deceived men in regard to the most sacred duties and relations to their Creator, and the most weighty and vital concerns of time and eternity. There is no way possible of avoiding this alternative. To attempt to do so, by ascribing to Jesus the character of an enthusiast, who was self-deluded in respect to his pretensions, and verily believed himself possessed of the attributes and powers, and to

have wrought the wondrous deeds and to hold the relations to God and man, which he claimed, would be simple absurdity. No such supposition could be entertained by a reasonable mind for a moment, save concerning a downright madman; and surely no one will be found mad enough himself, to charge Jesus with insanity.

The calmness and quietness of his demeanor, the thorough self-control and presence of mind which he exhibited in the most trying positions of his life and even in his death, the self-consistency which he maintained from the beginning to the end of his career, the wisdom, the dignity, the meekness, the benevolence, the moral sublimity which appeared in all his acts and words — acknowledged freely by such infidels as Rousseau and Thomas Paine — compel us to the conviction that he was not an enthusiast, or if so, yet one who thoroughly understood and appreciated, and was entirely responsible for the meaning and force of every word he uttered and every pretension he put forth. Such is the man who has claimed, unequivocally, to be the Messiah of whom prophets through a score of centuries spoke, and as such to hold relations and possess a character and authority such as never did or can belong to another; who has claimed to be divine; and to be the only Saviour of the world; who has taught that his death on the cross was a necessary offering without which sin could not have been forgiven; who has claimed to have in himself power to forgive sin and grant eternal life to all that will come to him; who assured his disciples in positive

terms that he would rise from the dead by his own power and ascend to heaven there to be the Mediator of his people; and fully and distinctly taught that at last he would come again to judge the world and assign to all their final portion. His chosen twelve received and believed these things from his mouth, and his church has continued to believe them to the present day. Here then are the very words of Jesus. They are true or they are false. If true, he is our Supreme Lord and Saviour; if false, he is an impostor unworthy of our regard. There is no middle ground, no room for compromise. We must decide for him or against him. And if we decide against him, if with his ancient enemies we deny his claims, saying, "Nay; but he deceiveth the people," where else shall we find light and hope? To whom shall we go, if he has not the words of eternal life?

SERMON II.

THE RELATION OF THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST TO THE ATONEMENT.

THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.—JOHN V. 20.

The verse from which the text is taken reads thus: "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life." A more emphatic testimony to the divinity of our Lord could not well be given.

It is alleged, for the purpose of throwing doubt upon the argument for Christ's divinity, drawn from the frequent application of the title of deity to him, by the inspired writers, that the term God is in scripture also applied to men. That, in a few instances, it is so applied, in the Old Testament—never in the New Testament—is true; but always in such a connection, or with such qualifications, that there can be no mistaking the inferior sense in which it is employed. In the eighty-first Psalm, magistrates are styled gods; but there is no possibility of mistaking the figurative use of the term. "I have said, ye are

gods, but ye shall die like men." When Moses delivered to the children of Israel the precept, "Thou shalt not revile the gods," (*i. e.*, the judges,) "nor curse the ruler of thy people," there was no danger that they would understand him to claim for these rulers divine attributes or even divine powers.

Moses is called "a god unto Pharaoh," that is, a messenger speaking for and with the authority of God. Nowhere do we find this term applied to man, as a simple title, unqualifiedly, as it is applied to Christ. He is called God, without any limitation or qualifying phrase, indicating an inferior use of the term. The title is given to him, again and again, in the same manner as it is given to the Father as if of right it belonged to him. And so of right it does belong to him. The apostle John, as if to cut off all occasion of doubt, and render it impossible to question his deity, declares, "This is the true God, and eternal life." In an equally unqualified manner were all the titles of Jehovah applied to Christ.

To Christ, too, are all the divine attributes ascribed; to him are attributed all the works of God; to him divine worship is paid by holy men and angels; and he is declared to be equal with the Father. We unhesitatingly assert that if the doctrine of the personality of God the Father is taught in scripture, then, with equal explicitness, is taught the doctrine of the proper deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; for not a name, nor an attribute, nor a work, nor an honor, is declared to belong to the one, which is not also declared to belong to the other.

Assuming, then, that the deity of Jesus Christ is a scriptural doctrine, we propose to inquire if, in accepting it, we are not also obliged to accept with it the doctrine of the vicarious atonement? Are not these two doctrines so related that they must and will be received together? Can it not be made to appear that the doctrine of Christ's deity finds its appropriate and satisfactory explanation, only in the doctrine of a vicarious atonement; while the belief in the latter doctrine necessitates our belief in the former; so that every clear and positive proof of the one is so much strength added to the direct and positive evidence of the other? Such is the position we take, and as a presumptive evidence of its correctness we appeal to:

1. *The fact that they who have rejected or modified the doctrine of the atonement have uniformly rejected or modified the doctrine of the divinity of Christ.*

If there have been any exceptions to this they have been of rare occurrence. If it may be taken as an admitted historical fact, which none, it is presumed, will dispute, that the rejection of Christ's vicarious death has always been accompanied by the denial of his deity, does it not seem to imply most strongly that there is, in the minds of men, an inconsistency in holding to the latter while rejecting the former? If it be not so — that, to thinking men, there is a felt relation between these two doctrines, so close and necessary, that they must stand or fall together — what is the explanation of the fact that they have always been received or rejected together? Is it a mere coincidence? Nay.

The rejectors of the atonement seem to say, practically, and do say in words, that there was no need of the incarnation of a divine being to do such a work as they ascribe to Jesus Christ—the mere moral enlightenment and spiritual elevation of men. In their view, it would be a waste of divine treasure, to employ an incarnate deity to perform a work for which a highly exalted human or angelic nature is sufficient, and to believe that God has done this makes an unnecessary demand upon human faith. With this conclusion, the believers in the atonement may most heartily agree, for we may without hesitation assert:

2. *That if the work of making a vicarious offering for sin be excluded from the mission of Christ, scripture assigns no adequate reason why a divine being should become incarnate to undertake it.*

There are two radically different views of the nature and object of Christ's mission, one or the other of which, stated in general terms, is adopted by all who receive the revelation of the gospel. The first, setting aside theories of particular schools, and presented in familiar language in which all may agree, is, that Jesus Christ came into the world to render salvation possible to men, by an offering of himself as a sacrifice for sin, so that God might be just and the justifier of him that believeth. They do not understand scripture to teach that Christ came to make it more convenient for men to be saved, or to secure, by moral influence, the repentance and return to righteousness of a larger number than would otherwise have yielded to the divine influ-

ences already in the world; but to provide an atonement which should make it consistent with God's righteous character or government to save any, "that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish* but have everlasting life." The opposite view, — denying that any obstacle to man's salvation ever existed in the character or government of God, and asserting that men might have been saved, if Christ had never come, on the same terms as they are now saved, — makes Christ's work to consist in the more clear revealing of God's attributes, especially his mercy, in the teaching of the truth, and the offering, in his life and death, more powerful persuasives to lead men to repentance and piety.

If the former view be the correct one, then the necessity that a divine being should take upon himself the form of a servant, and humble himself to the death of the cross, can be made clearly to to appear. If the latter view be true, we can see no adequate reason for the humiliation of the divine Son of God; we can discover, in such a work, nothing which an angel, or a human being, filled with the Spirit and sustained as God's grace could sustain him, might not have done. So say they who adopt this view; and consistently they reject the doctrine of Christ's proper deity.

But let us inquire more particularly, if there was anything in the work of Christ, essential to human salvation, which an angel, or a sanctified and inspired man, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, might not have accomplished?

3. *Was divinity an essential qualification in a teacher of the truth?*

Did Jesus Christ make to man revelations which could not have been made through an inspired man? The question is not,—whether Jesus Christ, being himself the Head of all wisdom and knowledge, did "speak as never man spake," or as never man could speak? None of us could hesitate in answering that question affirmatively. Nor is the inquiry, at this point, whether it is through the coming and work of Christ, foreknown and predetermined in the eternal counsels, that all revelation, in former and later time, has been given to men. No believer in the evangelical view of Christ's mission doubts this. The first revelation of mercy to the sinning pair in Eden, was the promise of a coming redeemer; and it was the "Spirit of Christ," in the ancient prophets, as well as in the apostles, that enabled them to "speak as they were moved." Most firmly do we hold, and most unqualifiedly do we teach, that but for the purpose, held in the eternal counsels of the Godhead, to provide for human salvation by the incarnation of the divine Son of God, the ears of a fallen race would never have been saluted by voices of heavenly love and mercy; and respecting the grace and forgiveness of an offended Deity, earth would forever have remained as silent as hell. It is not the procuring cause—the ground of that mercy vouchsafed to man in the divine revelations—for which we are now inquiring; but the necessary qualification of the messenger by whom the revelation is sent. It is in this view, that we hesitate not

to say that, unless it be admitted that Jesus Christ does teach his own deity and proclaim himself the life of men because in his death there is a vicarious offering for sin, then there is nothing in his instructions which might not have been communicated to men through a human teacher inspired by the Holy Ghost. His moral precepts, surely none will say, were of a nature to preclude the idea of their being taught by one commissioned from God and filled with wisdom by him. And the great truth, which it is claimed he came to teach, namely: that of God's love and mercy toward men, and his readiness to receive and forgive the returning penitent,—this the prophets of old taught as positively as did Christ. The Old Testament is full of such teaching. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

Was it necessary that deity should become incarnate to teach this doctrine more plainly? Indeed all the truths, preceptive or doctrinal, which Christ taught, are found also in the writings of his apostles,

as plainly and as fully taught as in the gospels. It is true that most of them received their knowledge by a personal intercourse with the Saviour, but will any one so limit the power of God, as to say that he could not have communicated to them the same knowledge by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Indeed it was thus that Paul, who has given us more than they all, received his knowledge of divine things. He was not, like the others, a companion and disciple of Christ while he dwelt on earth; neither did he have instruction from those who were his immediate followers. He was directly inspired of God. This he most positively affirms, — "I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen: immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood; neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before me. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save Peter the Lord's brother:" and afterwards he says, that those whom he met "in conference added nothing to me." It was God's own spirit that inspired Paul to teach so fully and clearly, as in his epistles he has done, the doctrines and precepts of the gospel.

It may then be said, without presumption, that to make the revelations of the gospel to men, did not

require the attribute of divinity in the teacher; and we cannot find in this part of the work of the divine Son of God any satisfactory explanation of the mysterious fact of his incarnation.

It may be said, however, that in the death of Christ, as a divine person, there was a more forcible representation to men of the mercy and earnest love of God for them, than could be gained by any other mode of teaching. Full assent is given to this statement. The spectacle of the dying Son of God on the cross of Calvary, is the most wonderful proof and exhibition of the love and mercy of God, of which the mind of man can conceive; but it is just because in it we behold an atonement for sin.

Take away this element of vicariousness, and it becomes the death of a martyr for the truth only. The individual who looks upon the sight feels no personal relation to it, such as to constrain him to cry out, in the fulness of his heart, "The Saviour died for me."

He may see in it an exhibition of God's love in allowing his Son to die in attestation of the truth; but he rather shrinks from it as an unnecessary suffering; for he who would not believe the testimony of Christ before, would hardly be more ready to believe on account of this added element of a present divinity in the death of the cross, as a simple attestation of that testimony. Indeed the whole history of Christianity shows that the event of Calvary has been powerful to move the hearts of men to repentance, when viewed as a vicarious sacrifice only and not when viewed as a martyrdom. It is they who look

upon it as vicarious, that make use of it as a common means of awakening in the minds of men, lively conceptions of God's mercy and love, and in general, I may say, those only. While, therefore, it is readily acknowledged that the divinity of Christ adds greatly to the solemnity and affecting character of the scene of the Saviour's death, it does not seem to be anything like an adequate explanation of the incarnation, to say, simply, that it was to give to men an exhibition of a divine martyrdom for the truth. Had a perfectly holy man taught and died as Jesus did, the truth would have been sufficiently attested to convince any who were not determined to reject it. If Christ was divine, he must have come for some other end, besides that of making a revelation of the truth that God is merciful.

4. *Was divinity necessary to the performance of the miraculous works of Christ?*

It is true that Jesus claimed these works as proof of his divine mission and divine character. It is true that he placed himself on an equality with the Father in the performance of them: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." It is true that these miracles, being thus wrought by his own power, became proof positive of his divinity; for it is inconceivable that the Deity would delegate miraculous power — all power in heaven and earth — to a mere man to be employed and appealed to in proof of so blasphemous a falsehood as the claim of equality with God. The miracles of Christ were a proof of the divinity of Christ, because he claimed them as such, and his claim could not be false,

unless God was a party to the deception. But that the proper deity of Christ was necessary to the performance of the miracles is not admitted, for aside from this *peculiar claim* to divine power, the works are no more proof of the presence of divinity in him, than were the miraculous plagues of Egypt proof of the divinity of Moses. The prophets who went before, and the apostles who came after Jesus, wrought many wonderful miracles. They raised the dead, cast out devils, healed the lame, cured diseases, and wrought many wonderful works in attestation of their authority as messengers from God. It was not to effect such wonders then that a divine person must needs take up his abode on earth, in the likeness of sinful flesh.

5. *Was divinity necessary in order to the offering of a pure example?*

We know that beside the Son of God, who was also the Son of Man, no one born of woman has ever lived on this earth a life of perfect purity; and this has been because all have partaken of the original taint of depravity.

Christ, though made in the likeness of man, yet had none of that original perverseness of man's nature. He was born immaculate.

But are we to conclude that it was because divinity was united to his humanity, that he was kept immaculate, and that this was the sole condition upon which human nature could be kept from sin in a world of sin? In other words, are we justified in assuming that a human being created without the taint of depravity, and placed among

men as Jesus was, with the aid of the Holy Ghost given without measure, must necessarily fall into sin? Must we suppose it to be beyond the power of God's Spirit so to sanctify and sustain a being created pure, that he should never fall, even in the midst of temptations, such as those to which Christ was exposed? Surely we may not thus limit the Holy One. That power which can take the man, defiled with sin, and purify him, and bring him back to holiness, and perfect him in grace, and make him meet for the company of pure spirits in heaven, is surely equal to the work of preserving in purity an angel or a finite being created holy, though clothed in human flesh and placed among men.

We cannot admit therefore, that divinity was necesssary in order to the presenting of a holy example to men in this world of sin; nor can we admit that in the example of a holy life, which Christ has given, we see an exhibition of his divine nature. Such a view would go far toward destroying the efficacy of that example, as a means of leading Christians to higher attainments in piety. It was not offered to us to prove or illustrate the fact that deity cannot sin; but to show how a being, created like ourselves, and tempted in all points as we are, could yet resist temptation and live holily, in order that we might have an example for imitation, and be encouraged to strive after a like purity. Now, if it was the deity in Christ that secured his performance in a sinless state, and if this was the only condition under which such a result could be attained as a holy life on earth, then instead of seeing in the life

of Christ an example for our imitation, we see a holiness placed as far beyond our reach as that of God himself, and its effect, as an influence upon us weakened, if not destroyed. We see not a holy man, subjected to temptations, and yet by the aid of the Spirit overcoming them; but a God, incapable of sinning, and therefore holy. Is it in this light, that Christ is set before us, in those passages where his example is presented for our imitation? I think not. "To him that overcometh," saith he, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, *even as I also overcame*, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Paul, exhorting his brethren to lay aside every sin and run with patience their race, directs them for an example and encouragement to look unto Jesus; "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider," says he, "him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

"Christ," says Peter, "also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Now, if in these and like examples of Christ, we are not to look upon him as a man tempted in all points like as we are, but as one who has overcome, who has endured, who has maintained a pure and holy life, only because he was divine, is not their force in a great degree weakened? So indeed it appears.

Not only am I persuaded, from considerations drawn from scripture and from the suggestions of reason, that we are not under the necessity of seeking an explanation of Christ's perfect life, in his divinity, but I am made to feel that by so doing we should greatly lessen the power of that life over the hearts and lives of his followers. It is Jesus Christ the man, whose example is given us to imitate, not Christ the God. He was made flesh that he might partake of our nature and be "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin," and thus show us how to overcome the world; not by virtue of the fact that he was divine, which we are not, but in view of the fact, that he was man as we are, and that God's Spirit aided him as the same Spirit is promised to aid all the infirmities of other men, who in sincerity seek this assistance.

Thus far then, in the work of Christ, we find nothing which seems to demand the incarnation of a divine being as a necessity for its accomplishment. To secure the ends we have enumerated is essentially the work which they ascribe to him who deny the vicarious atonement. To such, he is a Saviour, in being a teacher and an example. How can these offer a satisfactory explanation of the fact, that a divine being came to do a work, which a created being with the aid of the Holy Spirit might have done? Such an explanation they do not attempt, but seek, rather, to avoid the dilemma, by denying the fact of a divine incarnation. But to us who believe that the proper deity of Jesus Christ is as plainly taught in scripture as is

the personal existence of Jehovah himself, there is no alternative than to reject that view of his mission which limits it to a work, which a created being might have been commissioned to perform, and to look farther for an explanation of the wondrous mystery of "God manifest in the flesh." We find that explanation,— nay more, the necessity of that mysterious fact,— in this other doctrine, which is also clearly revealed, namely — that Jesus Christ came not alone to teach the truth, and to present a holy example, but also to procure for the fallen and lost race of man, the remission of their sins, and the gift of eternal life, by the sacrifice of himself.

6. *This work of making an atonement for sin a divine being only could accomplish.*

We do not desire to take the position, so lately taken by many,— that the provision made for man's salvation, by the death of Christ is the only one which divine wisdom could make to accomplish this end, neither would we deny the correctness of this position.

God has not made known this matter to us. He has taught us, that in the sacrifice of Calvary he has placed man's only hope of salvation, and we are warranted in saying, that no less *costly* a provision could have met the demands of his holy character and government. He has also taught us, that his own divine Son has come into the world, that whosoever believeth in him "should not perish but have everlasting life;" and by that vicarious offering of himself on the cross Jesus has declared, that mercy is alone to be obtained: "As Moses lifted up the

serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth should not perish, but have eternal life." This work, we say, a created being could not have performed. Such a one, furnished by divine grace, and aided by the divine Spirit, might have been the bearer to us of a full revelation of God's mercy; he might have presented to us a holy example for imitation; he might have wrought miracles in proof of his mission from God; he might have died the death of a martyr in the cause of man's salvation; but he could not, in the very nature of the case, have offered an atonement; he could not have become a propitiation for the sins of the world; he could not have borne the sins of men in his body on the tree, and thus have opened a way whereby God might be just and the justifier of them that believed in the sacrifice. As a created being in teaching, laboring, dying, he would only be pursuing the path of duty; he would only be fulfilling the obligations, which, by virtue of his relations to God as his Creator and Preserver, would rest upon him. With such a nature he would hold, essentially, the relations to God and man, which the holy prophets and apostles have held, and could, no more than they, procure salvation by the gift of himself as a sacrifice. Had the prophet Elijah, from his birth to his death, lived a perfectly holy life, he could not have become a vicarious sacrifice for the rest of the race, and thus have purchased their redemption from the demands of justice. Neither could any other creature have done it. On every creature the law of God has claims, to

the full extent of his ability to render obedience, and in no possible way can he do more than simple duty.

He who would become a vicarious sacrifice for sinners — who would deliver the transgressors of the law from its penalties — must be one, in his very nature, above law, one on whom law has no claims for service. Such a one, voluntarily assuming the form of a servant, and placing himself under the law, and accomplishing the obedience due to it, and yet suffering as a transgressor in the stead of sinners, may make the law honorable; while, for his sake, its penalties are withheld from those who righteously deserve them. Such was the person and such the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who though divine and equal with the Father, yet humbled himself and became obedient even to the death of the cross. For us, "he was numbered with the transgressors." "He who knew no sin, became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "He was wounded for our transgressions, and by his stripes are we healed." In him, and in him alone, we find salvation; for "this is the true God and eternal life." Eternal life is in him, because he is the true God. The collocation of these two ideas of Christ's divinity and the great blessing which he has procured for man in one sentence has a deep significance, which we trust has been in some degree illustrated by this discussion.

If the position which has been taken be the true

one — that the fact of the divine incarnation finds its only satisfactory, and with our present light, its only possible explanation in the doctrine of a vicarious atonement offered by the Son of God — then

7. *All the proofs, furnished in scripture, of Jesus Christ's proper deity, are so many proofs of the vicarious value of his obedience, sufferings and death.*

If the one is sustained by the inspired testimony, the other must, of necessity, follow. In addition to all the direct teaching of scripture, in favor of this grand article of Christian faith — that of a vicarious atonement — we have the fullest, most positive, and clearest teaching concerning Christ's divinity to strengthen and confirm our belief; and we recognize in this doctrine of Christ's proper deity the very corner-stone of the whole evangelical system. We know that if he be divine, to whom are variously applied the titles of God, the Lord, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the I am, Jehovah; to whom are unqualifiedly attributed the works of God; to whom the divine attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, eternity, righteousness, and mercy, are ascribed; to whom are paid the honors of divine worship by holy men on earth and angels and sainted spirits in heaven; who is declared to be equal with the Father, by his own lips and by the words of his apostles, and who is called the "true God and eternal life;" if this Being is divine, then is he a Saviour also — not by a figure of speech, but in very deed and truth, a Saviour, who by obedience even unto death, has purchased eternal salvation for all that believe on him.

We have not, in this discussion, ventured to inquire respecting the nature of that vicarious suffering which Christ endured, and which a divine human being alone could endure; nor do we propose to do so at length; but it may be here a fitting question:

8. *Was divinity necessary, in order to the exercise of that wondrous sympathy with sinners, attributed to Christ in scripture; and that, on entering into their condition, so as perfectly to compreheud and feel all their woes, and take their evil upon his heart, he might bear with it and for them; and in this do we see all there is of vicarious value in Jesus' suffering?*

That in this sympathetic endurance of the woes of a sinful race, consists the whole of Christ's vicarious sacrifice for sin, is the boldly pronounced and labored theory of Dr. Bushnell — whose eloquent writings have much agitated the Christian world, and whose latest utterances emphasize, in a remarkable manner, this moral view of the atonement.

In the writings of Jonathan Edwards, he has fallen upon a passage which he pronounces "the finest paragraph in all his works — setting forth Christ in the sentiment of his vicarious relation to men as their Redeemer and Saviour." That paragraph of Edwards is as follows: "Christ's great love and pity to the elect was one source of his suffering. A strong exercise of pity excites a lively idea of the misery under which he pities them * * * his love and pity fixed the idea of them in his mind as if he had really been they, and fixed their calamity in his mind as though it had been really his. A very

strong and lively pity toward the miserable tends to make their case ours; as in other respects, so in this, in particular, as it doth in our idea place us in their stead under their misery, with a most lively sense of that misery, as it were feeling it for them, actually suffering it in their stead by strong sympathy." "And yet," says Dr. Bushnell, "he (Edwards) could not see the atonement here; that was transacted on the nails and the wood![1] As if the mere suffering of his human body were anything in comparison with the great moral woe of his heart, or as if it were intended to be anything but an outward sign of that. We see from his words that he had the key in his hand, but he did not dare to use it. Had he thus been able to see the matter of the sacrifice, in the moral analogies so powerfully sketched by himself, instead of lapsing under the jargon of penalties endured, and legal compensations paid to justice, what strength and clearness would he have added to all our Christian ideas — giving us a gospel simple as our own human feeling, and faithfully interpreted and verified by it!"

The courage in which Jonathan Edwards was deficient, it was reserved for Horace Bushnell to exhibit. Having "this key in his hand" which the theological giant of New England dared not use, he proposes, with it, to unlock even the secrets of God's infinite nature and of the Saviour's infinite love, in the offering of an atonement for sinners. "I propose," he says, "to interpret all that is prepared and

[1] Perhaps Peter was under a like obscurity of vision when he said, "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree."

suffered in the propitiation of God and the justification of men, by a reference to the moral pronouncements of human nature and society; assuming that nothing can be true of God, or of Christ, which is not true in some sense, more humane, and is not made intelligible by human analogies. We cannot interpret God, as any one may see, except by what we find in our own personal instincts and ideas." The meaning of this, as appears in the more full development of his scheme, is, that by the experiences of human sympathy and the possibilities of human feeling, we are infallibly taught what was, and what alone could be, the nature of that soul woe which the Son of God endured to bring salvation to a sinful race. And this soul woe was endured not "to *redeem*" men, but to win them; for we are not allowed even to regard this sympathetic woe of the Redeemer as, in any sense, a satisfaction rendered to divine justice, nor even a substitution, as a governmental expedient, admitted in the stead of the deserved woe of sinners.

They who hold to such views of the vicarious work of Christ, he declares, "contrive a justice in God, which accepts the pains of innocence in place of the pains of wrong, and which is, in fact, the very essence of injustice."

As Dr. Bushnell himself teaches that Jesus, the innocent one, suffered this intense woe, in order that guilty men might escape, through his ministration of sympathy, a *deserved woe*, we see not why this charge of injustice does not equally recoil upon his own scheme. In the one case,

as in the other, Jesus is equally innocent, and suffers equal pains. But of this we wish not now to speak.

That the sympathetic sorrow which Jesus endured is as distinctly and positively recognized in the vicarious work of Christ by those who teach that there was in that work a satisfaction of divine justice, as by him who teaches it to be the manifestation only of a love that would *win* men, is seen by the passage already quoted from Edwards. We may add another, from the author of "God with us," and "Outlines of Christian Theology": "Beings who have a like spiritual nature can realize and bear the spiritual sufferings of one another." And "bearing another's woe is sympathy or compassion, when either of these words is used in its deepest sense." It is suffering with another; enduring what his spirit endures; sharing not in his bodily ill, but the feeling which that ill excites; not his sin and guilt, but the spiritual state of remorse and fear consequent upon them. Owing to the imperfection of their knowledge and love, the sympathy of men with one another is only partial, and not at all commensurate with that of Christ.

Christ's human nature was virtually perfect in knowledge and love. It had not, to be sure, all knowledge, but it had, at every moment, all the knowledge requisite to the complete performance of its work for that moment. And for practical ends this was as good as omniscience. His love was equal to his knowledge; so that all the conditions for absolute sympathy met in his person. When therefore we read of his agony of soul in the garden

and on the cross, culminating in the feeling expressed by the cry 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' it is not difficult to believe that he experienced the bitternesss of remorse, and the horror of being deserted by God. Without professing to have set forth the way and the only way in which Christ actually bore the penalty due to men for their sin; without asserting that Christ bore just the amount of suffering which awaited sinners unredeemed in eternity; and without overlooking the dignity of his person, which gave inestimable value to his death, we think a way has been indicated by which he could have borne the penal woe; and if so, however different in some of its elements might have been the actual suffering of soul endured by him, from that which we have suggested, the objection to our doctrine has been sufficiently met."

Believers in the common views of the atonement do not fail to dwell, with adoring gratitude, upon the sorrow of the soul which Jesus endured by his sympathy with the guilty ones he came to save. Most gladly do we accept from Dr. Bushnell all those ardent and glowing illustrations and delineations which intensify and exalt our views of the preciousness of that sympathy; but we are only shocked at that presumption, which claims for human understanding the right to declare positively,—"Here is the whole of Christ's vicarious sacrifice."

We do not admit the justness of the charge made against Edwards, that "he could not see the atonement here, that was transacted on the nails and the wood."

We do not hesitate to emphasize "the great moral woe of his heart," as far exceeding the pains which Jesus endured in body: and we believe it was a woe which no mere human being could experience; for omniscience only could be equal to a perfect understanding of all the woe of sin. We quote as a scriptural proof of the Saviour's omniscience, the expression of the apostles' prayer, "Thou Lord who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." We cannot conceive how Christ could make his "soul an offering for the sin" of the world, without an omniscient sympathy, which could enter into the sorrows of all hearts, and perfectly appreciate all the infinite phases of human woe and human guilt.

But to us it appears the height of presumptuous boldness and irreverence, to judge deity by human analogies, and to pronounce this sympathetic sorrow to be the whole of the soul woe, which Jesus endured in the agonies of Gethsemane and Calvary. Can we read thus easily the inmost heart of the Son of God? May we bring God's ways before the standard of human reason, and determine and pronounce upon their possibility, by our fallible understanding? May the incomprehensible God, in this the most amazing of all his manifestations to men, be perfectly known? Nay, if it is permitted us to see, in some of its features, the suffering soul of God's Son, in the great offering for our redemption, most surely it becomes us to bow humbly before the incarnate mystery, and with reverent awe say, "Lo, these are but a part of his ways."

If it be asked of us, what beside this sympathetic grief was the suffering of Christ, or still again what was the exact relation which the divine bore to the human in the endurance of the vicarious agony, we can only reply by a simple confession of ignorance: nor, in the acquaintance of more than a quarter century with the writings of others, have we been able to see evidence of knowledge in them. These are plainly questions beyond the reach of the human intellect. No investigation will ever solve them.

We would not declare all discussions of these subjects presumptuous, nor pass judgment upon the learned writings of those who have sought to penetrate these secrets, as wholly unprofitable; but, in our view, the chief benefit, derived from these discussions, has been the bringing into clearer light the incomprehensible mystery of the Cross.

Fitting, in this connection, are the words found among the earlier utterances of Dr. Bushnell, though perhaps he may have outgrown them: "The mystery of the divine human must remain a mystery. I cannot fathom it. Reason will justify me in no such attempt. And when we come to the sufferings and death, I would withhold myself in like manner, and require of myself to look only at what the sufferings and death express. It is commonly held that suffering in God is impossible, though we never hesitate to affirm that he is displeased thus and thus, and this displeased state is so far of course an unpleased or painful state. But even if it were otherwise, if God in his own nature were as unsusceptible as a rock, that fact would justify no inference

concerning the person of Christ. The only question is whether God, by a mysterious union with the human, can so far employ the element of suffering as to make it a vehicle for the expression of his own grace and tenderness; whether indeed God can be allowed, in any way, to exhibit those passive virtues which are the most active and sublimest of all virtues, because they are the most irresistible, and require the truest greatness of spirit.

"Therefore, when we come to the agony of the garden and the passion of the cross, we are not, with the speculative unitarian, to set up as a dogma beforehand, as something that we perfectly know, that God cannot set himself in any possible relation with suffering; nor, believing with the common trinitarian that there are two distinct natures in Christ, are we to conclude that no sort of pang can touch the divine nature, and that only his human part can suffer. We cannot thus enter into the interior of God's mysteries. We are only to see the eternal life approach to our race; divine love manifested and sealed; the law sanctified by obedience unto death; pardon certified by 'Father forgive;' peace established and testified by the resurrection of the dead."

In this discussion, we have purposely avoided this presumption so fittingly deprecated. We have viewed the subject in the light of revealed fact and revealed doctrine; not in the light of philosophical speculation. Without undervaluing the latter, we prefer to keep ever close to scriptural representation.

If, in objection to aught we have said or implied, the question be asked, Did Deity suffer on the cross? we should meet it by a similar question,— Was Deity humiliated in the incarnation? and then make reply to both these equally difficult questions, in the words of divine inspiration, "Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of thé cross;" taking refuge from all philosophic difficulties, behind the words of one who though he had been up to the third heavens and heard things unutterable, yet did not fully understand this matter. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

SERMON III.

THE GOSPEL PROVED DIVINE BY ITS PERVERSIONS.

WHICH THINGS ALSO WE SPEAK, NOT IN THE WORDS WHICH MAN'S WISDOM TEACHETH, BUT WHICH THE HOLY GHOST TEACHETH.—I COR. II. 13.

A young infidel was scoffing at Christianity, in the presence of Dr. John M. Mason, because of the misconduct of its professors. Said the Doctor to him,—"Did you ever know an uproar to be made because an infidel went astray from the paths of of morality?" Upon his admission that he never did, Dr. M. replied,—"Then do you not see that by expecting the professors of Christianity to be holy, you admit it to be a holy religion, and thus pay it the highest compliment in your power?"

By this retort the mouth of the opposer was shut. Sceptics and opposers of the gospel of Christ have ever been disposed to judge of its claims by the lives of its professors; and as, without difficulty, they have discovered a vast deal of hypocrisy and immorality among those who have professed to belong to the number of Christ's disciples, they

have readily laid the charge to the gospel itself, and have appeared glad of such an excuse for rejecting it. In this judgment, however, they have manifested either positive dishonesty or criminal recklessness. They have either known the conduct of these false professors, on whose account they reproach the gospel, to be contrary to the principles and precepts of the gospel, and therefore not to be laid to its charge, or they have not taken pains to examine the system of Christianity which they reproach, to learn what it does teach and what are its requirements.

The former is reckless dishonesty; the latter dishonest recklessness. Undoubtedly, to the majority of those who have fought Christianity, on a large or a small scale, both dishonesty and recklessness might be attributed justly.

Hume confessed that he had never read the New Testament with attention; and the ignorance of the sacred writings exhibited by Voltaire, and Paine, and other infidels is well known.

The dishonesty of judging Christianity by its perversions, in the false systems and false lives of its pretended friends, is most apparent. If we had no written word of ultimate authority, embodying the principles of the system in infallible statement, and were under necessity of trusting to tradition for our knowledge, and of looking to those who call and have called themselves Christians, for our only acquaintance with Christianity, then it might be acknowledged a fair procedure, to judge it solely by what appears in the lives and systems of those

professing it. But Christianity does not so come to us. It comes offering certain sacred writings claiming to be inspired of God, and to contain his will and his truth made known to man. Doctrines are taught and precepts delivered which are to be received by men and wrought into their lives ere they can be acknowledged Christians. Such is the explicit teaching of the divine oracles. Those who do thus receive the truth and the influences of the gospel become, it is taught, new men, and are henceforth actuated by motives and governed by principles holy and right. Supreme love to God and equal love to man form the basis of the law of Christianity.

Now shall the sincere inquirer reject the claim of the gospel to be divine, because the lives and systems of its professed friends, in a great multitude of cases, are inconsistent with the teachings of the sacred book? Shall the gospel be rejected because of its perversions by wicked men? By no means. On the contrary, *these very perversions, to the candid, sincere inquirer, will be additional proof of the divinity of the original.* They show that the gospel is not of man, for man is the author of these perversions, and if he, with all the light of the sacred word shining on him and aiding him, forms such evil systems and allows such evil conduct, how can he be the author of so pure and holy a system as the Christianity of the New Testament, of which Jesus Christ is the great Teacher and model Character? Let it be remembered that this gospel of Jesus Christ most positively claims to be of divine origin;

and then the more minute and detailed the examination of the various errors in doctrine and practice, which have assumed the Christian name may be, the stronger will grow the conviction, by the comparison of the false and the true, that, while these are the work of man, the words of Christ, of the apostles and prophets, are "not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

To this study and comparison, then, we would not hesitate to invite the sceptic; and if he will deal fairly, he will find those very things which he has been accustomed to regard as a reproach of the gospel, and an evidence of its falsity, while they do not belong to the gospel, to be yet a proof that the gospel is divine.

The perversions of it by man and the almost universal tendency of man to pervert it, will prove, to a candid mind, that it did not originate with man.

Consider the perversions of the Roman Church.

To examine them all would require a volume: but some of the main features may be noticed briefly.

We see then here a church professedly Christian, which, for centuries, held sway over a great portion of the civilized world. Its doctrines and spirit have been fully exhibited and can be studied in the history of peoples and nations. It has claimed to have the keys of heaven and hell, and to hold, within its communion, all that are to be saved. In its priesthood, beginning with the lowest priest, and rising through ascending grades to bishops, archbishops, cardinals and Pope, resides the power to grant absolution to sinners on confession, or to withhold on

grounds satisfactory to themselves, and to consign to perdition. The Head of this hierarchy — the Pope — is the vicegerent of God on earth, and is infallible. He claims power to remit sins, and as in multitudes of instances he has done, pretends to permit them; and his indulgence has been and can be purchased with money. Through this consecrated line of apostolic successors in the priesthood only, grace comes to man as a sinner. Those who yield assent to this system, and seek salvation within the fold of the church, are promised life; but if any refuse, the church claims the right to coerce, and to deliver the rebellious into the hand of the tormentor or executioner. History teaches to what extent this right has been exercised. The sword of the faithful has reeked with the blood of heretics; the scaffold, the flames, the dungeon, and galleys, have received their thousands and tens of thousands of the incorrigible.

But how has this church instructed those that have acknowledged her authority? She has taught them to look to her priesthood alone for instruction; she has shut the Bible, forbidden them to read it lest they be destroyed by heresy; she has fed them with such doctrines as trans-substantiation, auricular confession, priestly absolution, penance for sin; she has taught them to adore the Virgin Mary, to pray to saints, to reverence relics, to acquire merit by repeating paternosters, to observe fasts and holy days, and to cross themselves with holy water. She has taught that if they are faithful in these things, common vices, immoralities of

life, venial sins, do not hinder their being good Christians.

Such are some of the marked characteristics of the Roman Church.

And though better teachings and lives have been known within its communion, yet such as described, it appears, as a system, in the history of centuries. The sceptic studies this history, and exclaims,—"Is this system of priestly power and ambition — this tyranny, intolerance and cruelty — this merchandise of sin — this mass of superstition and ignorance — Christianity? Then I reject at once such a gospel." Thus reasoned Voltaire, and thus have thousands in Roman Catholic countries, and elsewhere, been driven into infidelity.

But we call upon the sceptic, inclined to follow these men in their reasonings, to stay.

We put into his hand the New Testament and bid him study Christianity, as the Lord Jesus Christ has taught it, and compare it with this perversion of Rome. What a contrast does he find! In the place of priestly power and ambition, he sees a fraternity of humble men, bound by a common love to God and righteousness, all equal in the sight of heaven, and all priests unto God; in the place of tyranny, intolerance and cruelty — mutual service, kind instruction and patient persuasion, gentleness and love; instead of the traffic in sin — the most severe purity of heart and life demanded as service to God; instead of a superstitious worship of the Virgin, and the invocation of saints, and adoration of relics — the enlightened worship of the living and

true God, and the seeking of salvation from the power and consequences of sin, through Jesus Christ the only Saviour. Here is true freedom, true morality, true worship. Who, with sincere candor, can look upon this contrast, without being constrained to say,—That system of worldly power, pomp and policy, shows man's authorship,—This system of heavenly truth and wisdom is of God? The human perversions only the more forcibly compel us to accept the divine origin of the true. If, after centuries of elaboration, in which work the wisest men in the Roman communion have wrought, this church has degenerated from a perfect system of truth and worship to such a system as popery presents, how can we avoid the conviction that some wisdom, greater than man's, must have conceived and established, in that age of the greatest corruption of doctrine and manners, that perfect system itself, the pure and holy gospel of Christ? To a similar conclusion shall we be led, if we contrast with the pure gospel the perversions of the Greek church and other eastern churches. These show what are the gospels which man would frame. But let us leave these systems of superstition and look upon the opposite errors.

The perversions of Christianity by German philosophers and their imitators in other lands.

These are men of highly cultivated minds, who claim to be farthest removed from superstition. They have undertaken to remodel Christianity, and to free it from the errors and crudities discovered in it by their wisdom. And what have they given us?

Systems which, for their greater simplicity and sublimer truth and purer morals, command our ready assent, as improvements on the gospel? Far from it. On the contrary, the more they have diverged from the simple gospel, the less worthy of respect have their doctrines become, till, for fancifulness and absurdity, they equal the dreams of a sleeper. We find them attempting to explain the miracles of Christ on natural principles, resolving his power into that of a mesmerist or a conjurer; or, reducing the history of Christ himself to a mere myth — a kind of fictitious narrative — in which the church embodied their ideas, moral and spiritual. We find them teaching Christianity to be a development of human reason, progressing from age to age; and they hesitate not to reject many of the teachings of Christ and his apostles, respecting the character and destiny of men and the method of redemption. They loosen the bonds of morality, make little or nothing of faith, and repentance, and prayer, and substitute some general philosophical ideal of the beautiful and the true for the holy; and the cultivation of the intellect, for the piety of the heart. And these systems — a combination of philosophical speculation, literary criticism and fanciful theories, with some elements of religious truth — they denominate Christianity.

The gospel of the New Testament is emphatically a religion for every class of men — the poor, the ignorant, and the savage, as well as the rich, the wise, and the enlightened. But this amended gospel of philosophers requires a life of philosophical

study to apprehend it. It comes not to masses of men with life-giving influence. There is nothing in it which has power over the spirit of man — which has a grasp on his conscience — and with authoritative words directs him to duty.

Is it not a proof of the divine origin of the gospel, that when learned men, with the teachings and experience of eighteen centuries before them, undertake to improve upon it as given in its simple form in the New Testament, they do so invariably fall into puerilities, or plunge into monstrosities, or float off in wild vagaries and transcendental theories? And while these works of men appear among men for a little while, and vanish with their authors from remembrance, the gospel in its simplicity, comes down from age to age, and ever finds hearts to accept it, and men to live by, and give up all for it and for the hopes it creates. So the human perishes, and the divine endures.

Another argument for the divine original of the gospel, we may draw from *the various perversions of the unevangelical sects.*

I have reference to those systems of belief which repudiate, or by their modifications render null such fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as entire depravity, regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit's power, redemption by the vicarious sufferings of Christ and future retributions of the righteous and the wicked. Multitudes there are in Christan lands who adopt such perversions of the gospel for the truth, and claim that it is the Christianity of Christ which they hold. Many do this

honestly, having, no doubt, set out with a wrong bias of mind, to investigate truth; many have willingly given up their judgment to be moulded by prejudice and desire; and many have perversely sought not to know the truth, but to bend scripture to their preconceived and chosen opinions. But whatever the influences that have led men, they have variously departed from the truth as it is in Jesus, and adopted a mutilated gospel, in the place of the true. These systems we view but as particular illustrations of the almost universal desire and disposition of man to seek for some modification of the gospel. It is a fact that men do not naturally find satisfaction in the doctrines of Christianity. Their pride of intellect and station, their pride of heart, their love of sinful objects, and their disrelish for true godliness, all are opposed to these divine truths, and so the unsanctified heart finds some method of avoiding them.

This tendency of men to obscure doctrines so pure and strict shows that, left to himself and his natural likings, man would never have framed such a system as Christ has taught, and the various perversions, which so abound, wherever the gospel comes, show this most forcibly, and compel us to the belief that the gospel is not of man. Man, unguided by divine wisdom, would have framed it so that it would have less offended human pride, laid less severe restraints on human desire, and humbled human reason less. The severe purity, the sublime mystery, and the elevating character of its doctrines, so humiliating the natural man, and

so exalting God, as compared with the unevangelical system prevalent, make it clear, that the latter are "the words which man's wisdom teacheth," but the former, "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

It is not however in these perverted systems, or in them that hold them alone, that we discover evidence of that opposition of the natural heart to true Christianity which proves man not to be its author.

We see the same among evangelical sects.

The doctrines accepted by these sects may, in general, be the true teaching of Christ and his apostles, and the systems of morality taught by them may accord with the inspired precepts; but there is still room left for the natural mind to show whither its tendencies are directed.

Very few are there, if any, whose conceptions of truth come up to the standard of the New Testament teaching, and those who approximate more nearly to it, are persons who, themselves, most emphatically declare that they have experienced enlightening from the divine Spirit. They do not claim by unaided reason to have attained such understanding of divine truth.

Among professed Christians even, there is a constant tendency to lower views of truth and duty than the gospel plainly teaches. Take the conception of the Christian life and character, entertained by the great mass of the members of our churches and compare it with that which may, and ought to be gained by the study of the precepts and examples of the New Testament, and how great is the

contrast! The form is taken for the substance, and external duties satisfy, when the devotion of the whole heart and life is required. Multitudes are the professed followers of Christ, who, if brought to the tests which Christ has given, and called to walk strictly to the letter and spirit of his precepts, would start back, as if this was altogether too much to be demanded. When they hear the faithful teacher set forth the duties, apply the tests and delineate the features of true Christianity, they are wont to say within themselves, "This is a hard saying." Even if they admit the correctness of the representation, they look upon it as very severe, call it close preaching, with an air and a tone which plainly mark it as in their estimation unusual, beyond what ordinary Christians are expected to reach after, much less attain. They set their standard much lower.

To illustrate, more fully, let us look at some of the particulars in which the ordinary conception of the Christian life falls below the true standard. The gospel requires us to love God with all the heart, and have reference to his will and honor in every act. How few Christians adopt this, in all its breadth, so as to inquire in every transaction of business, in every gratification of desire, in every movement of life, what is God's will concerning it! Many never seem to think themselves called upon to ask for the will of God respecting what they shall eat and drink, what apparel they shall wear, what houses they shall build, what furniture and equipage they shall provide, what journeys they shall take, or in what places they shall reside. Many even smile when

the duty of so doing is suggested. And yet what is clearer or more positive than the gospel command,— "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?"

Again, the Christian principle respecting property makes the man a steward, to whom God has entrusted talents to be occupied for him. He is to employ those talents, use the possessions, and conduct the business, whatever it is, as an agent for God. In every trade he makes, in every investment, in every labor, in every expenditure, he is to consult the will of the great Proprietor, and he is to use all his capital for such purposes and to promote such ends as God desires. Where are the men of business, professedly Christian, that have such conceptions of their calling? Are they not altogether too few,— here and there one? The gospel commands, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This forbids the exalting of self interest above the interest of our fellow men, and calls on us, in all our transactions of business, to have our neighbor's welfare equally in view with our own, and, in all our dealings, treat him as though he were another self. Very often do we hear apologies for selfishness, and arguments to establish the inordinate claims of self-love; but how often do we behold even professing Christians appreciating, in its full extent, the high, disinterested love enjoined in the second command?

Thus it is a most palpable truth that the great mass of Christians even do, in their conceptions of the Christian life and character, fall far below the standard plainly set up in the gospel. And those

who far excel the mass, and excel in their apprehension of holy obligation, do never yet reach such a perfectness of conception, that they do not, as they study more and more the teachings of Christ and his apostles, find, springing up in their minds, new views and loftier thoughts of true godliness. There are no Christians, even the wisest and holiest, even those whom unwilling sceptics are compelled to confess to be godly men, that sit down contented in the belief that they have sounded the deepest depths or reached to the loftiest heights of the truth contained in the sacred volume. On the contrary, so long as they live, they ever find it a well of living water, from which they can draw fresh supplies of holy thought and knowledge.

How shall we account for this transcendent superiority of the teaching of the Scriptures over the conceptions of even its friends and students, but by ascribing its authorship to God himself? We all know that the wisest and best of the church, throughout all its history, have made it their study to attain the highest and noblest conceptions of man's duty, and the principles that should govern his life; and we know that none, in all they have written or said, have excelled, or even equalled, the standard set up in the New Testament, while the masses have ever fallen below it: and is it possible for us to believe that man, unaided, in an age and among a people ignorant, barren of great truth and clear thought, could have conceived and established so perfect a system as the gospel? It cannot be. The fact that man, though making the gospel a

study, has so constantly fallen short, both in conception and practice, proves that the original must have had an author more than man. Thus man's perversion — man's failure — proves God's truth.

This is most powerfully forced upon us, as a correct conclusion, when we compare the teachings of Christ and the writings of the apostles, with the writings of Christian men in the times immediately following. Writers in the present day, with all the light afforded them by the works and history of the centuries past, since Christ came, occupy a much more advantageous position than did even the apostles; but those who wrote in nearly the same times stood more on a level with them. How do the writings of these ancient fathers compare with those comprised in the book called the New Testament? The contrast is most remarkable. The descent from the apostles to the fathers is not by a gradual decline, but by a steep precipice. An almost immeasurable chasm separates them. When the last epistle of the apostles was written it was most evident that inspiration ceased. No one, in comparing with the New Testament the writings of those that followed, would ever be in danger of supposing that they belonged to the same class. The latter show plainly the power of the men of that age; the former show divine wisdom.

Thus the perversions of the gospel by the unfriendly and unfaithful, the attempted improvements upon it by the wise in their own conceit, the imperfect exhibitions of its doctrines and precepts, in the words and lives of its friends, all lead us only

to the more certain conclusion, as we look upon its transcendent superiority, that itself is not of man. The gospel claims to be divine. The various authors are far from asserting themselves to have originated the system of truth they teach, but point to God as the source of the knowledge. "Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." "I certify to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." For eighteen centuries since these words were spoken, enmity has sought to prove this gospel a delusion; worldly wisdom and philosophy have sought to improve it; human desire and preference have perverted it into false systems; friendly minds have sought to elaborate it into creeds and systems of morality; and love has striven to realize its conceptions in life and character: but, high above all these assaults of enmity, these criticisms of worldly wisdom and philosophy, these perversions of depravity, these elaborated systems of friendly minds, these imperfect lives and characters of professed disciples, the gospel towers in sublime excellence.

Is it the work of man, like these, its friends and foes, or is it the work of God? Did Christ teach as only a man, and are these narratives and epistles the work of the simple fishermen of Galilee, and the disciple of Gamaliel; or did Christ teach as the divine Son of God, and the apostles speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?

SERMON IV.

THE ATTEST OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

AND MANY OF THE SAMARITANS OF THAT CITY BELIEVED ON HIM FOR THE SAYING OF THE WOMAN WHICH TESTIFIED, HE TOLD ME ALL THAT EVER I DID. — JOHN IV. 39.

The interview of the Saviour with the woman at the well of Jacob appears to have been blessed to her conversion. By one sentence Jesus revealed his knowledge of her present sinful connection, and she seems to have felt certain that he knew her heart. Her whole life of sin was at once brought so forcibly to her view, that she felt, as sinners often do under conviction, as if her evil deeds were all written upon her forehead, to be read plainly. Though Jesus had spoken to her of but one of her sins, it seemed to her that he had enumerated them all, and under this impression she hastened to the city, calling to her neighbors, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Jesus had plainly announced to her the fact that he was the Messiah, and she had the witness within her that he spoke the truth, and she believed. That

which convinced her of his Messiahship she doubted not would convince others; and hence she proclaimed her experience to them, as an evidence of the truth of Christ's claims. Nor did they refuse to receive this testimony. It is recorded, "Many Samaritans of that city believed on him, for the saying of the woman which testified — 'He told me all that ever I did.'"

As it was with the woman of Samaria, so is it with the great mass of the disciples of Christ at this day. That which most powerfully convinces them of the truth of the gospel of Christ, is their personal experience of its power, and its adaptation to their own spiritual necessities; and when they would urge upon others the proof of its divinity, their arguments are most often such as their experience furnishes. Nor is it a vain appeal which Christians make to their own experience in proof of the doctrines of the gospel. It has, as it ought to have, great force, and many have been constrained to believe the testimony.

Christian experience does furnish legitimate evidence of the truth of the gospel doctrine.

It gives confirmation of those very truths which most offend the pride of the sceptic and first awaken the spirit of cavil.

The system of morality taught in the New Testament men are compelled, by reason and conscience, to accept. They can say naught against it. Neither do they cavil at the historical facts, because in reality the historic evidence of them is insufficient, but because of the consequence of their admission as

facts. The miracles of gospel history, once admitted, establish the infallibility of gospel teaching concerning man's lost estate, and the way of redemption; and it is hostility of heart to these humbling doctrines of grace, which animates the wicked warfare against the inspired authority of the sacred narrative. "Humility is the virtue of a whipped dog,"[1] is the scornful sentiment of a leader among philosophic unbelievers; and repentance, faith and prayer are scouted by the Mills, the Huxleys and Tyndals.

The teachings of Christ and his apostles concerning the depravity of man, his ruined condition, the efficacious nature of the death on Calvary; justification by faith in the Redeemer, regeneration by the Spirit, the communion of the renewed heart with God; these are the features of the gospel which awaken the enmity of ungodly men, and call forth their opposition.

It is in such soil that historical scepticism takes deep root and grows rankly.

The converted infidel at once accepts the gospel history. Why? Not because the historical evidence has been suddenly augmented; but because the enmity of the heart to the doctrines of grace ceases to blind the soul's vision, and the true force of that evidence is seen. In the great battle we must wage with unbelief, we rejoice in the mighty weapons ready to our hand in the armory of historical, external evidence, and in the constant additions made thereto by exploration and research, as the years pass on; but that evidence which comes to the sup-

[1] Emerson.

port of the doctrines of grace directly, we esteem of far greater value. The historic truth of the Bible may be accepted, while scepticism still holds the heart closed against its doctrines; but if these are believed, scepticism will vanish.

The experience of Christians furnishes just this most effective evidence. It testifies to the truth of the doctrines of grace, directly and positively. By Christian experience I mean those exercises and states of heart and mind, common to all who have become subjects of renewing grace; such as, an overwhelming sense of guilt, an acquiescence in the justice of the condemnation pronounced upon sin, an earnest cry for pardon, a view of Christ as a Redeemer, with the exercise of personal faith and trust in him; and also the resulting feelings, a sense of pardoned sin, peace of mind and joy, delight in, and spiritual communion with God and the Saviour, hatred of sin and hunger for righteousness. The subject of such exercises looks upon time, eternity, life, death, man, God, all things, in a new light. He seems to himself a new creature. Such are in brief the chief elements which enter into every Christian experience, and in multitudes of cases they are most clearly marked. If this experience, professed in millions of cases, is genuine, it ought surely to be received as emphatic testimony in favor of Christian doctrine. It is a practical testing and confirmation of the truth of man's depraved and ruinous condition; of the atonement; of justification by faith; of the Spirit's work in the new birth, and of spiritual com-

munion. It is good evidence, and deserves to be received.

It is appropriate, of a kind most needed; for it meets scepticism at the very threshold.

It comes directly to the support of those doctrines at which the evil heart is first inclined to cavil. These doctrines are spiritual in nature and need like evidence in character. To him who receives implicitly the teachings of the Bible, as of divine authority, the word written is proof. But the sceptic refuses this authority. He must have evidence, more direct and positive than the assertions of a book, concerning whose origin and authorship he is in doubt. Christian experience is just such evidence. It affirms the truth of the doctrines taught because it has proved them true by an actual, personal, spiritual, acquaintance with them. The plain Christian declares them to be true because he declares he has felt their truth in his own heart and conscience. His consciousness of the work, wrought in the feelings and emotions, in the underlying propensities and moral disposition of his soul, bears testimony, with such unmistakable voice, to the truth, that he finds it impossible to doubt.

To this evidence the caviller objects as delusive. "The man is deluded, and is not qualified to be a witness in the case," says he. But he who thus speaks of Christian experience, betrays an ignorance of the matter, arising from a want of proper attention, or a want of real candor. The truth is, the evidence here offered is of the same character as

that on which philosophers build up their systems of mental and moral science. The testimony of consciousness, and the study of the various states of the mind, furnish them data from which to reason; and why shall not the Christian draw from the same sources? Is the Christian alone to be disbelieved when he testifies concerning what he has felt and experienced? Is he to be charged with delusion and set aside as an unworthy witness, on the ground that he testifies to an experience which other men know not? That men have been carried away by delusive feelings, I do not deny; but for any man, or set of men, like religious sceptics, to assume that the entire Christian church, for eighteen centuries, have been deceived in respect to the simplest states of mind and feeling, and this, too, on the ground of their own ignorance of such feeling, is, to say the least, presumption, if not insolence. If men may not testify of their own internal changes of thoughts and feeling, of what can they speak with confidence?

But, passing from the consideration of the general character of this evidence, let us look at some of the details.

What is the testimony of Christian experience respecting the doctrine of depravity?

The teaching of scripture on this point is clear, full, explicit. It represents man as radically depraved in heart and principle, entirely destitute of love for God's character and law, and thoroughly inclined to evil.

Here are two men,— one is a Christian, the other

a sceptic. Once they were alike unbelievers. The Christian speaks here with positiveness. He knows, as far as he is personally concerned, that the scripture representation is true. Once he disbelieved the doctrine. He was unwilling to admit himself to be so radically corrupt. But the truth has reached him. He has been made to see that scripture has rightly described his moral condition, and from the very depth of his soul has cried out, unclean! unclean! He has felt himself to be dead in trespasses and sins, and that only some power without could quicken him to spiritual life. He can now speak for himself, and say, "I know the doctrine of depravity to be true, for I have seen my own heart." Is not this suitable and worthy evidence, or shall the sceptic's ignorance prevail against this man's knowledge? Once these two men stood upon the same ground and held like opinions respecting the purity and nobility of human nature, and were equally offended by the charge of personal corruption. But to one of them the revelation has come; not procured by his personal effort or inquiry, but brought to him by some spiritual agency, unknown hitherto. The scales have fallen from his eyes, and he has looked down into the depths of his own nature, to discover what before he believed not to exist there—a fountain of sin. In forming opinions on the word of which of these two shall we place reliance? Shall he who is still blind, or he who once was blind, but now sees, be esteemed the better witness?

What is the testimony of Christian experience respecting the doctrine of the new birth?

Scripture declares, that in order to a life of holiness and true enjoyment, man must be born again, renewed in his inner nature by the Holy Ghost, and represents such as have experienced this change of heart as new creatures. To them "old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new." The Christian tells us of just such a change, of which he has been the conscious subject. "I know," says he, "that it is no ordinary change, the result of good resolutions, or of my own efforts, which I have experienced. It is a more radical and thorough work which has gone deeper than the surface of my actions. It has reached my inner man, and affected my very tastes and moral dispositions, and given a new direction to my thoughts, desires, inclinations, affections, purposes. It has transformed my very heart. I feel that I am not in character the same man I once was: I have not the same views of myself, of God, of time, of death, of eternity; I am a new man and all about me is new." To such a change the Christian testifies in the most positive manner. The sceptic sneers at it as delusion. Many cavillers have done so, whose testimony has afterward been added to that of other Christians. But shall the sneer of the inexperienced caviller prevail against the testimony, positive and full, of the experienced Christian? Shall not his experience be received as worthy of credit?

It is easy for an objector to pronounce it a delusion. But let me ask the sceptic — What right have you to make such an assertion? What right have

you to claim to be believed when you make it? Is it the result of a careful examination, or is it a mere baseless sneer?

"I question not the man's honesty," he kindly says; he doubtless believes that he has met with this wondrous transformation, but he is deceived."

I ask again — Are you sure of this? How do you know it? Have you entered with your piercing vision, the man's soul, and observed his inner life, more accurately than has his own consciousness? In what has he deceived himself? Is he deceived, when he declares, "I have met with an entire change in my views of sin, so that I now regard with abhorrence that conduct in which I once delighted?" Is he deceived when he declares, "I now look upon holiness of heart and life as the chief thing to be desired, though once I regarded it with dislike?" Cannot he tell whether he indeed loves that which he once hated? Cannot he tell if the whole current of his thought and affection is turned into a new channel? May he not know whether the whole aim and purpose of his life are directly the reverse of what they once were?

We ask you not to accept testimony from the impulsive, the visionary and the fickle, but from men of the soundest minds and clearest intellects. Select from this congregation or community the man in whose strength of mind and practical wisdom you have the highest confidence. Let him be business man or scholar. Let him be an honest man, but thoroughly sceptical respecting this doctrine of conversion. You know his views, and have

confidence that he will stand firm in them. Next Sunday morning this man shall stand before this congregation and declare that a remarkable change has taken place within him. He shall relate that, in connection with the reading of the scripture, or some meditation upon truth, a power has come upon him, of which he can give no account, save to state the fact, that there has been wrought a wonderful transformation. Sin in its essence, as rebellion against holiness and God, his own character as a sinner, defiled, guilty, condemned, he has seen as never before. An agony of soul, in character and intensity unlike anything formerly experienced, has compelled him to cry for salvation from the woe — "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" At length, out of the great darkness, he gets a glimpse of Jesus as a personal Saviour, and out of overwhelming distress cries, "O Lamb of God, take away my sin!" At once he becomes sweetly conscious of a personal friendship between Christ and his own soul. His burden of sin has fled, and an unwonted peace reigns in his heart. The character of God is glorious to his view. The Word, before dark and threatening, is all luminous with truth, and glowing with promise; his fellow men have all become his brethren: the motives of his life are changed, and he is, throughout, a new creature.

Now, will you believe him? Why not? Is he not a man worthy of credit? You so esteemed him one week ago — is he so no longer? Does the very fact that he professes to have experienced this

change make him false, or disqualify him to bear witness concerning it?

You say—"this is very strange; it is a great mystery; you have never known anything like this in your own inner life." Very well. Does all this make the man a false or unreliable witness? But is there any such witness as has been described? Yes, hundreds of them. They sit with you to-day in this congregation. They have often spoken, and are ready at any time to testify to you of this truth. You ought to accept their testimony as in the highest degree reliable. If men cannot testify in regard to such wonderful changes in their thoughts, feelings, affections, desires, purposes, as Christians positively declare themselves to have experienced, then can they say nothing respecting the states of their own minds — then is consciousness, itself, unworthy of credit as a witness. He who refuses such testimony of Christians, ought to be consistent, and reject, as unworthy of credit, all that his fellow men say respecting their own states of mind and feeling. But to the unprejudiced, honest inquirer, it will always come, as it ever has come, with convincing power.

The value of the evidence in favor of the truths of the gospel, afforded by Christian experience, is greatly augmented by its uniformity.

Though the accounts which different Christians give of their conversion vary much in particulars, yet it will be found invariably true that they agree in essential character. The greater or less intensity of feeling and the length and variety of exercises will

be found to have had their origin in the previous character and education, the particular truths which were before the mind, and the attendant circumstances of the conversion, while the essential features which mark a work of grace will appear the same in all cases.

But it is not to that which is technically called experience, that is, the exercises of mind which precede and accompany the *first* feelings of affectionate trust and joy and peace in the soul, that I would confine attention, but rather would embrace the whole of the Christian's spiritual exercises, from the first to the last, while he lives. In these experiences we find a most marked uniformity.

In essence, all Christians tell the same story; they testify to the same things. The evidence which has been adduced concerning human depravity and the new birth comes, not from one man only, or from a few, or from hundreds or thousands, but from millions, yea, from the whole church of the true disciples for eighteen centuries. It has been the same in past ages, as it is now. The experience of John Bunyan, though in particulars it may differ from that of many, yet gives the same evidence of the truth of the essential doctrines of grace.

It was out of his own heart that he wrote his Pilgrim's Progress, and its reception, everywhere, has been owing to the truthful representation of Christian experience which it contains. The learned scholars of the world would have scorned to reckon it worthy of a place in their libraries; but Christians everywhere found it a faithful mirror of themselves,

and they cherished it and it lived and circulated over the Christian world, till at length literary critics are compelled to pronounce its merits.

So it is: wherever are found Christians, there will be found the same testimony to the same experience. Learning or ignorance, youth or age, enlightened or savage life, alter not man's essential character, nor do they change the nature of the testimony which his Christian experience gives, in favor of gospel truth.

Let one read the missionary journals and note this uniformity. Oncken and the German Christians, the disciples among the French, the Italians, the Greeks, the nations of Asia Minor, the Burmans and Karens, the Indians of North America, the dwellers on the islands of the sea, and the enlightened men of our own land, all tell the same story, when grace renews their hearts. And shall this essential uniformity of experience go for nothing? Does it add nothing to the value of the testimony given, that men of every age, nation, condition and character, testify to the same things?

Men of high rank, of profound learning, of most discriminating minds, of unimpeachable veracity, and men of low rank, profoundly ignorant and debased; the gray headed, the middle aged, the youth, the child; the enlightened inmates of university halls, and the degraded bushmen of South Africa, dwelling in holes and caves of the earth, all give one uniform testimony, when grace renews their hearts, to the truth taught them by experience. My hearer, can you lightly esteem this fact?

But again, *the strong and abiding conviction of the truths of the gospel, which always attends Christian experience, adds great value to the testimony.*

Those who are truly converted by the grace of God are always most thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrines thus taught them. They hold no wavering belief. They are most confident in their opinions. They speak of these truths as they who know of what they speak — as men speak of things of which their senses have taken cognizance. What they have seen and felt and handled of the word of life they declare.

Attempt to convince them of folly in believing such doctrines. Speculate, reason with them, confound them by subtle argument, and still they will not yield up their confidence in the truth. They know what they have believed. No matter though they may be so ignorant as to be unable to state the reasons for their belief, they still believe with a confidence which cannot be shaken. They have the witness within them; the Spirit of God has written it upon their hearts. Nothing can drive out of their mind the conviction fastened on them by their experience. They would as soon doubt of what their eyes have seen as of what their hearts have felt.

This thorough, unwavering belief of the truth, which everywhere prevails, among Christians, goes to establish the genuineness of the experience which has taught them. Delusion soon passes away, and men discover their error in trusting to it; but as

years pass by the Christian becomes more and more established in his belief.

The testimony of Christian experience has more force from this fact also, that

It is addressed so directly to the hearts and consciences of men, and points them to a redemption of which they have in many cases felt the need.

The doctrines of depravity, the new birth, the atonement, and of spiritual influence, presented in clear, positive statements to the intellect, men more easily reject; but when they are woven into a Christian experience, and thus taught in their practical relations, the very men who before rejected, find themselves constrained to admit the truth. As the Christian relates the exercises of his mind, which involve these very doctrines, the hearer feels that there is a truthfulness in them which he cannot gainsay. It is just what his heart and conscience tell him he ought himself to experience. He knows that he is guilty and needs forgiveness; he knows that he is under condemnation and needs a Redeemer; he knows that he is inclined to sin and needs a renewal of heart; and when he hears a fellow man relate exercises which bring to view, clearly and forcibly, truths like these, he is constrained to confess himself convinced of them.

The mere doctrinal statement of the truth he can more easily deal with. It is an abstraction. He can attack it with his logic, tear it to pieces, scatter it to the winds, and rejoice in his intellectual exploit. But when the same truth takes form, becomes incarnate in, a personal history, and speaks to him out of

a living soul, he cannot dissolve it by processes of logic, any more than he can dissolve, into thin air, the living, speaking man before him. He cannot ignore or gainsay it, any more than he can ignore and gainsay the reality of many other wonderful personal histories of which he knows the fact.

While the doctrines of the reformation were making progress at the University of Cambridge in the sixteenth century, Latimer was a bigoted Catholic, and by his sarcastic and violent lectures against the new doctrines, had gained great distinction among zealous papists. "England," said his hearers, after the delivery of a discourse against Melancthon, "will furnish a champion for the church that will confront the Wittenberg doctors, and save the vessel of our Lord." But one of his hearers — a quiet, humble student of the gospel, who had been converted by reading the New Testament — resolved to make the attempt to win this champion of error to the truth, as it is in Jesus. Knowing that it would be vain to attempt argument, he determined, like the apostle, to catch him with guile. Entering the study of Latimer, he exclaimed, "for the love of God be pleased to hear my confession." The heretic Bilney prays to make confession to the catholic. Latimer was taken by surprise, and thought his discourse against Melancthon had converted him, and saw, in imagination, a crowd led to the church of Rome by this example. Bilney kneeled before the confessor, and related, in a simple and touching manner, his own experience. He told of the burden of sin he had felt, his struggles for relief, which were vain so long

as he followed the direction of the priests, and then how, by the light of the New Testament, he beheld Jesus as a personal Saviour and trusted in him and felt peace. He described the change wrought in his soul, the spirit of adoption he now possessed, and spoke of the spiritual communion he enjoyed. Latimer had listened, without mistrust, and the words of Bilney penetrated his soul like sharp arrows. He was convinced, at once, and his conversion, like that of Saul, was instantaneous. From that hour he became a zealous defender of the faith he once destroyed, and thus continued till, under the bloody Mary, he gave a final confirmation of his faith by a martyr's death.

A similar effect often attends the testimony of a Christian experience. It speaks to the heart, and every man who has reflected upon his moral nature and state with candor, feels a response to its truthfulness, coming up from the depth of his soul, of which he cannot easily rid himself. It is legitimate evidence of the truth of the gospel.

In closing, allow the remark to those who profess to be Christians, that our subject suggests:

A test by which the genuineness of their own experiences may be tried. Does your experience, my friend, illustrate and prove the doctrines of grace? The doctrine of entire depravity. Does your experience prove that? Of the new birth. Do you find, in yourself, the marks and evidences of such a radical change in thought, feeling, affection, purpose, as this which scripture describes? The communion with God, the justifying and peace giving faith in a

personal Christ, the love which passeth description. Does your experience find these true? Brethren, here is a call for self examination. May God's grace guard us against self deception.

Allow me also to urge upon my unconverted hearers,

The wisdom and duty of giving heed to the evidence of the truth of the gospel which Christian experience affords.

It is legitimate evidence. It is direct, and positive, and uniform, and persistent. It comes from those in whose honesty and soundness of judgment and purity of life you have confidence, and whose sincerity is attested to you, by their unhesitating and hearty venturing of their own eternal interests, upon the truth they declare. "Some years ago, a lawyer in Vermont found his way into a Methodist love-feast. Supposing that he should hear some strange things, he went prepared to take notes. At the close of the meeting, he arose and addressed the assembly as follows, 'My friends, I hold in my hands the testimony of no less than sixty persons, who have spoken here this morning, who all testify, with one consent, that there is a divine reality in religion, they having experienced its power in their own hearts. Many of these persons I know. Their word would be received in any court of justice. Lie, they would not, I know, and mistaken they cannot all be. I have heretofore been sceptical in relation to these matters. I now tell you that I am fully convinced of the truth, and that I intend to lead a new life. Will you pray for me?'" Who of

you can convict him of folly in this conclusion? Who of you are not convicted of folly, that you have not long since done likewise? Have you not similar testimony of many of your neighbors and friends, in whose discrimination and practical good sense you have the highest confidence; to whom you would go for counsel in the most difficult affairs? And, in addition, have you not the testimony of multitudes, the world over, the generations through? Why then do you not receive the truth and be saved? Say, shall this host of witnesses rise up to witness against you in the last day?

SERMON V.

THE ENORMITY OF LITTLE SINS.

FOR REBELLION IS AS THE SIN OF WITCHCRAFT, AND STUBBORNNESS IS AS INIQUITY AND IDOLATRY. — I SAMUEL XV. 23.

While Saul was king of Israel, he received, through the prophet Samuel, a direct and positive command from God, to gather his army and utterly destroy the nation of Amalek, with all that pertained to them. "Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." This was a fearful sentence; but it was God's righteous judgment against a corrupt and guilty people whom he would blot from the earth.

Saul proceeded to obey, and easily overthrew these enemies of God. But he did not perform all that was commanded him, for he "spared the king, Agag, and the best of the sheep and oxen and the fatlings and lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but everything that was vile and refuse that he destroyed utterly." For this

omission, God was greatly displeased with Saul, and sent Samuel to denounce against him the severe punishment — that he was rejected from being king over Israel. When the prophet came to the king with this sentence, Saul sought to defend himself against the charge of sin, by claiming that he had fulfilled the main work commanded, and had only departed from the directions in trifling particulars, and that, even, with a good intent. "Wherefore didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, said Samuel, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord?" "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen; the chief of the things that should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal."

But such special pleading was not allowed by Samuel. He at once showed Saul its fallacy, by this pertinent question,—"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?" "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry."

It is God's prerogative to command. It is man's duty to obey implicitly; it is not his privilege, by the substitution of some other conduct in the place of that required; to impeach the wisdom of his Sovereign. Thus to amend God's command is to rebel

against him. It is a stubborn adherence to one's own wisdom rather than submission to God's, and he regards it with no more favor than he does witchcraft and idolatry. Saul had flattered himself that his departure from the strict command, in minor details, would not seriously depreciate his general obedience to the order given. But — like many another man — he grossly deceived himself. Samuel showed him that God regarded this departure as a grave offence, fit only to be compared to the most heinous sins known in Israel — witchcraft and idolatry; and that the penalty would correspond in severity. "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

As it was with Saul, so has it been, so is it still, with multitudes of sinners. Many of their sins they esteem of trifling consequence, scarcely needing to be repented of, and surely deserving of no severe penalty. But God judges sin by no such standard. In his sight, all sin is rebellion and stubbornness, of the same essential character as witchcraft and idolatry.

That there are different degrees of demerit in sins may well be admitted. We are taught this by reason and scripture. There are many elements which go to make up the heinousness of any act of transgression. We must consider the natural disposition of the man; the degree of light possessed by him, or within his reach; the degree of malice or other evil quality in the motive; the influence under which the act was committed — whether it was induced by sud-

den and strong temptation, or without any promptings, save those which an evil heart supplied. Thus only, can we arrive at a just estimate of the comparative guilt of any sin. That God does thus view the sins of men, we have reason to believe, from the teachings of his word; but that any palliations can do away with sin's enormity and make it a trifling matter, in his sight, there is no reason for believing. In God's sight, some sins may be of greater guilt than others, but none are small.

To this thought,— the enormity of little sins,— let us give attention.

1. *God's law requires perfection.*

I know men do not like to think that their conduct is to be tried by such a standard, and they make a thousand plausible excuses and pleas, all of which proceed upon the assumption that a certain degree of sin God will overlook in those whose lives, in the main, are right.

But all this is deceit and practical infidelity. God's law is the standard of human conduct, and God's law is perfect. How do we maintain the divine origin of the law contained in the sacred volume, except by this very fact that it is perfect? Could the denier of revelation fix, upon the moral law of the Bible, one clear and obvious defect, either in its positive requirements, or in the omission of any which ought to be made, how quickly would it be seized upon as the basis of an argument against the divine authority of the scripture! With what eagerness have sceptics sought such imperfection, that they might overthrow confidence in the divine Word! But their search has

been in vain. Did the Bible contain such a law as men would be willing to receive as the standard of their conduct, that very law in its imperfection would be sufficient proof that the Bible could not have had God as its Author. To attribute such a law to God is the same thing as to attribute to him imperfection, and to assail his holiness and purity. This men are practically doing, when they set up a lower standard than perfection, as the rule of judgment. They are willing to cast a stain upon God, in the attempt to justify themselves. They would make him approve an imperfect law, that they may not be charged with guilt for imperfect conduct. Can it be a matter of trifling consequence, thus to traduce the character of Jehovah, in order to do away with the guilt of sin? Can that be a sin of small moment, which, if admitted and approved by him, would destroy his glorious perfection, in the sight of his creatures? And yet any sin, however small it may appear, in the view of men, if admitted by the law of God, would forever stain his holy character.

Can Jehovah then regard sin as of little enormity? Nay, all sin in his sight is abominable — the thing which his soul hateth.

The standard which he has given, and which alone he could give, consistently with his holy character, is that contained in the words of the Saviour, when, teaching with authority, he said to the multitudes — "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Every departure from this is a sin; and every sin in God's sight is heinous. It is a violation of his command, and though through Christ he can

pardon, yet he cannot ignore or cease to condemn it. "How can it be supposed possible," said a flippant caviller to a poor, ignorant Christian, one day, "that God would destroy Adam and his descendants only for eating an apple?" "It was not," he replied, "that our first parents had only eaten some kind of fruit; it was that they disobeyed God; it was that they broke the order." There is great force in the simple reply. All sin breaks the order. Men are prone to estimate the guilt of sin by the immediate and obvious evil effects, and do not take into account this most important element — that it is a violation of a command of God. We may say of those sins usually deemed trifling, as did the simple-hearted Christian. It is not that the committer of the deed has done so great and obvious an injury to others about him: it is that he has disobeyed God; that he has *broken the order*. To disobey God, to break through his command, can never be justly esteemed trivial. The least sin is heinous.

This will be more apparent when regarded from another point of view:

2. *The greatness of depravity which even little sins presuppose.*

So accustomed to sin and its effects are we, that we do not stay to estimate correctly the depravity from which it springs. It is not possible for us to comprehend fully the just demerit of any transgression; but we may approximate a just view in no way better perhaps, than by contrasting the state of heart of a pure sinless being with that of one who, for the first time, has committed sin.

Look, then, upon this angel, who has ever lived in entire conformity to the will of his God: who in every act and thought has met the divine approval. No unholy desire has ever found place in his heart. He has never had a wish other than to obey. Filled with love and gratitude to his Maker and King, he delights in paying him adoration and praise. He is pure, holy and happy. But let him once disobey that Sovereign, in the least particular of his command, and how great the change! He has broken the law, and has become a transgressor. He stands no longer erect in his integrity; his soul is stained with sin; unholy desire has found a place in his heart; holiness no longer appears most lovely and sin most odious, for he has chosen the latter, in the place of the former. Fear, and shame, and a sense of guilt take the place of conscious rectitude. The holy being has fallen; he has tasted the filthy cup of sin and the baneful effect of the draught is felt in all his nature. He is defiled: he is no longer a fit resident of the holy place, nor a fit companion for unfallen spirits. He would contaminate heaven by his presence; and should he strike his harp, it would jar with harsh discord, in the heavenly choir. Could he join in that anthem of the pure ones and cry holy! holy! holy! unto the Lord? Ah no,—sin, sin, sin is in his heart, and that word of praise would be a lie upon his lips. Holiness is not the supreme desire of his heart; for he has chosen sin, in its stead; and that one act has proved a heart depraved, turned away from God, the Holy One.

Let us look upon him, while deliberating the act

that has ruined him, and see if this is not the truth. The temptation is set before him. He turns not away from it, in haste and holy fear, but hesitates and parleys. "Shall I do this deed and sin against my God?" he asks. Conscience replies, "Do it not!" Inclination prompts to try a forbidden thing. Then arises a struggle. Conscience and reason resist, saying, God commands — obey him — yield not to sin — touch not the unclean thing. The heart, already perverse through parleying, offers excuses, promises gratification, persuades to the evil, till conscience is overcome and sin is chosen in the place of holiness — a base idol, in the place of God. Does it not appear that the heart which can thus deliberately turn from God and holiness, and take the sinful gratification, though it be never so slight, renounces, in that very act, its allegiance and becomes thoroughly depraved? No matter what the precise character of the act, the essence of the guilt is in the choice, which can come to pass only when the heart is surrendered up to depravity, and as great, and as heinous as is that depravity, so great, so heinous is the sin.

Some one may say, "I admit the heinousness of such a deliberate sin, but my little sins are not thus deliberately done; they are the result of heedlessness."

But this, my friend, does not, in fact, show less depravity. You do not deliberate; you do not stop to weigh consequences; you are thoughtless, in your little sins. What does this prove to be the character of the heart from which such conduct proceeds?

Does it not show you to be so insensible to God's holy character and law, so utterly careless of your obligation to listen to his voice and obey his will, that you account it not worth your while to stay and deliberate, when tempted to do evil? Can the Most High God be ignored, thus, without exceeding guilt? Could you be thus insensible, thus heedless, were you not wofully depraved? Is not this the meaning of your little sins? *Little sins!*

In the commission of sin,

3. *Men cast exceeding contempt upon the wisdom of God.*

By the very carelessness and heedlessness in which they indulge, and the low estimate which they put upon their guilt, they say, emphatically, that the law which they violate is of little account, and that God has shown no especial wisdom in framing it. This law is altogether too particular, too strict; it is not necessary to pay much attention to it, in these minor matters. If one does break through some of its requirements, not much harm is done. Perfection cannot be expected of us mortals.

If the conduct and sentiments of men who speak of little sins, do not, when translated into plain language, mean just this, what, pray, is the true interpretation?

Now, what exceeding contempt of God's perfect law is this! It is no less than proclaiming that God's holy law may do well enough in theory, but as a practical standard, by which to judge human conduct, it will not answer at all. Such is the contempt which men, by their little sins of which they

take no account, cast upon God's wisdom. Is there no enormity here? These are the men who set aside God's universal command, "Do right," and in their own wisdom substitute another, "Do about right." Saul did so. He did what he considered about right, when he obeyed, in general; but departed from the strictness of the command, and "spared the best of the sheep and oxen;" intending to make it all right, by offering a portion of them in sacrifice unto the Lord God in Gilgal. But God made him to understand that obedience was better than sacrifice, and that the sin which he accounted trivial was of sufficient enormity to bring down on him the severest penalty, even the loss of his throne. So, in the final reckoning, will all men find it. Little sins will be seen to be great, and fearful will be the penalty.

The enormity of little sins appears in this:

4. *By them men show that they prefer the slightest sinful gratification, to the honor of God and of his law.*

The smaller the sin the greater the contempt of the law violated. If a kind father should command his son to do some duty, which would interfere but slightly with his own inclinations, the performance of which would necessitate but a small sacrifice of his own wishes, and that son should show an entire indifference to the will of his father, and should choose some mean gratification, instead of obedience, should we look upon the offence against that father's love as trivial, because the matter in which he showed this disregard of his father's will

was in itself small? Rather would not the reproach be cast upon him in this wise: "What, would he not forego so slight a gratification, in deference to a father's command? Could he trample on the love of a parent so easily?" Should we not estimate his guilt rather the greater, in proportion as the occasion was trivial and the influence of temptation weak?

So with sinners. The holy law requires obedience in a given case. "But," says the sinner, "this is a trifling matter"—and at once he breaks through the positive command, to gain the confessedly small gratification. He weighs God's holy law in the scales; and the smallest fragments, the very dust of sinful desire, will make the opposite beam ascend.

The smaller the desire and the meaner the appetite gratified in disobedience, the greater is the contempt for the law broken. Is there then, no enormity in little sins? Say, fellow sinner, who so carelessly and for so small a benefit, daily art trampling God's commands beneath your feet, can you claim to have in your heart any regard for him in whom you live and move and have your being?

But still farther, we may gain some idea of God's estimation of such sins by

5. *The fearful consequences attached to them.*

In measuring the guilt of sin, by such a standard, it is taken for granted that every man is to be held responsible for the natural consequences of his conduct. Still more, it will not be allowed, as an excuse, that the man did not know, when committing a sin, what the results would be, or even that

he could not have known them. This he knew — that the act was forbidden by God's law, and that the consequences must therefore be evil, and may be fearful. If with such knowledge, he enters upon the action, he does it forewarned; he does it at his own peril, and must take the responsibility of the evil that will follow; he may have sought to persuade himself that no evil will follow, but this avails him nothing. God has told him that all sin is evil, and its consequences are only evil; and of how fearful a nature that evil may prove to be, no man can foreknow. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die!" He who with such a knowledge — and who has it not? — chooses to indulge in any sin, must abide by the consequences of his choice: no apology can free him from the responsibility.

And how great is the evil which we often see to flow from sins which, in the estimation of their authors, are esteemed trivial! How many children have received an essential modification of character from a single evil remark, or a single evil example of a parent! How many a fatal accident, to the lives and well being of multitudes, has resulted from the culpable neglect of some duty deemed slight, or from the performance of some heedless act! They whose conduct has been thus evil in its results, knew that it was evil, when they did the deed, and must stand responsible.

No man knows, when he does a wrong, that it will not result in unmeasured evil. He knows that he ought to refrain from it, and if, with this before him,

he ventures upon it, his sin, however trivial it may appear to him, must be measured, by the unknown amount of evil he is willing to risk to himself and to others, in order to indulge in it.

But the more common consequences of little sins, and which it is the most fearful to contemplate, are their effects upon the moral character of those who commit them. In this view, it is hardly possible to estimate their enormity. It is, by no means, by great crimes chiefly, that men increase in depravity. It is by the constant repetition of those actions, considered by their authors almost too trivial to deserve the name of sins, that men harden their hearts in wickedness. Little by little, they blunt the edge of their consciences, and cultivate the evil passions and appetites of their depraved nature. Little by little, the intemperate man increases his love for strong drink, till at length the appetite becomes his master, and he falls into the drunkard's degredation. Little by little, the worldling strengthens his yearning after the treasures of earth, till he becomes the miser and worships gold as his God.

In like manner, by insensible degrees, do all men grow hardened in sin; and it is by indulgence in those sins, deemed trivial, that the work is effected. But are they trivial; can they be trivial, when such fearful consequences legitimately flow from them? No, my hearers, they are not trivial.

No sin can be of slight enormity in the sight of God; and as sin is, in the sight of God, so is it in reality. In proportion as we approach him in purity of character, in that proportion shall we see sin as

he does. In our present darkened and depraved state, we cannot justly estimate it; but we can see and know enough to make it appear terrible in its enormity. It is violation of the positive command of God; it is deadly poison in the soul of man; it is all evil, only evil, an enormous evil, wherever found and whatever the circumstances of its commission.

In the light of this discussion is it not safe to infer that,

1. *Many who, in this life, esteem themselves small sinners, will find a fearful catalogue of black enormities charged against them, at the day of judgment.*

Oh, with what different eyes will they look upon the lives which they now regard with so much complacency. How dazzlingly brilliant will then appear the perfection of God's law! How thoroughly vile and black that depravity of heart which ignored the divine holiness embodied in his command! How exceedingly base and wicked that contempt, heedlessly cast upon divine wisdom! How infinitely foolish and guilty that choice of trifling gratifications, before God's honor and love! And how terrible the consequences seen justly attached to those deeds which sinners once thought trivial! Overwhelmed with shame, remorse and fear, they accept the sentence and sink to their doom.

We are taught by our subject that

2. *The only safety is to avoid even the appearance of evil.*

Sin is too vile and corrupt a thing in its nature, too terrible a thing in its consequences, to be trifled with. "Fools make a mock of sin." "As a mad-

man, who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, Am not I in sport?" "Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" "Can one go upon the coals and his feet not be burned?" Ah, beware, dear friend, of this fire of sin. The least spark, cherished in the heart, may kindle a conflagration that shall consume, in its terribly avenging flames, thy soul and all its powers.

Finally, let us all take to ourselves the warning which our subject brings:

3. *As all have sinned thus heinously, all stand in perishing need of the mercy of God through Christ; and all must seek and obtain it or perish forever.*

Let there be no foolish pride in our hearts, in this our sad extremity. Let us not think to build ourselves up on self merit, and make a compromise with a holy God, and gain salvation because of goodness remaining in us. We are sinners; we are corrupted by sin; we are under a fearful condemnation for sin; we are lost, and Jesus only can save us. Oh, while he is so freely offering us his forgiving, his redeeming love, let us not wait, but fly to his arms, and find salvation there.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

SERMON VI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S VOCATION.

I THEREFORE, THE PRISONER OF THE LORD, BESEECH YOU THAT YE WALK WORTHY OF THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED.—EPHESIANS IV. 1.

The apostle exhorts his brethren to a state of mind, and a life becoming their high estate and blessed privileges. Let us seek to devolop the idea of the text for our own instruction and help, by the consideration of three questions: By whom are Christians called? To what are they called? And what is it to walk worthy of their calling?

I. BY WHOM ARE CHRISTIANS CALLED?

We may briefly answer the first question in Paul's words to the Corinthians: "God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son;" and to the Thessalonians: "Walk worthy of God who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory;" to the Romans: "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." It is the divine Father who has called them, by his grace, from the ways of sin, and from spiritual death, and renewed them, by his power, in the inward man. This doctrine of sov-

ereign, efficacious grace is made especially prominent in the Scriptures.

The inspired writers appear jealous, lest Christians may take to themselves some of the glory of their return to God; and they are careful to state in the strongest and most explicit terms, the truth that their gracious condition is the result of God's interposing mercy, which has chosen them in their sin, and called them to himself. They are "brands plucked from the burning"—subjects of renewing grace which has taken them in their depravity and wrought them into new men. "And you hath he quickened." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The inspired teachers do not represent men as inactive in this great change; but they emphasize the fact that divine grace anticipates their action and brings their wills, by its gentle and powerful influence, into unison with the will of God.

It is by the word of truth, the apostle James assures us, and of his own will, that the Spirit begets us unto a new life. The work is styled a new creation. Thus are Christians called, and it is God that calls them.

II. To WHAT ARE CHRISTIANS CALLED? To privileges, to duties, to rewards.

1. Christians are called to be the sons of God.

All men are the children of God. He is the universal Father of his creatures. On his bounty

they are fed. The arrangements of his providence manifest his care and his love.

But, in a peculiar and emphatic sense, God recognizes the sonship of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. These are not his by creation and preservation only, but by redemption and adoption also. They were once lost, but now are found again — lost from the ranks of obedience, found among God's enemies, and brought back and adopted into his holy family. They were once dead, but now are alive again — dead in trespasses and sins, but by the grace of the Spirit brought to a newness of life in Christ Jesus. God has thus chosen them, united them to his blessed family by adoption, and has given them all the privileges of sons.

And oh, what riches of grace are involved in this sonship!

(1) It insures the love of an infinite Parent.

"Behold," is the fervid exclamation of a disciple who had meditated much upon the blessed privileges of God's children, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God."

It is a love not simply of benevolence or pity, like that exercised towards all sinning creatures, manifested in the provision and offer of salvation, but it is the love of a parent who delights in the children of his adoption, and counts them his own. His grace has renewed them, and he beholds in them the beginnings of those holy affections and divine traits, which, in their full development, shall

make them like himself. They are his workmanship, and shall at length be perfected in holiness. He has begotten them by his Spirit and called them by his name. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Oh, what a joy is this, to the Christian, to know that God, the great Sovereign of the Universe, looks upon him, not with the pitying love of compassion alone, but with the complacent delight of a parent! To be looked upon with pity by the God whom we have offended, and to be permitted to come and seek for his mercy, with the assurance that the penitent cry will never be disregarded, is surely a privilege for which guilty men cannot be too grateful; but to feel that our sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ, and that we have been adopted into the heavenly family, and that God looks upon us with complacent love, as a parent upon an obedient child,—oh, who can tell the nearness of access to the throne of grace, and the sweetness of communion with the Father of our spirits, which such an assurance gives! This is the blessed assurance of faith. The Christian is an adopted child of God. "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

This relationship insures to the Christian,

(2) The tender care of the heavenly parent.

That God cares for all his creatures, rational and irrational, we know. "His tender mercies are over all his works, and he openeth his hand and satisfieth the wants of every living thing." "Not a sparrow falls

to the ground without his notice." But a special care does he exercise over his adopted ones. For them alone, his word assures us, are his providences so ordered that "all things work together for their good." No real evil can approach them, "for the Lord is their help and their shield." No earthly parent can have so tender an interest in the welfare of his children, and none knows, so well, in what that welfare consists; nor is any possessed of power like him to ward off the evil and bring the good. An earthly parent may forget or neglect to care, as he ought, for a child, in the multiplicity of his other cares; but no such thing can be said of our heavenly parent. He will ever be mindful of his covenant. An earthly parent may grow weary and faint in his charge; but "He that keepeth Israel never slumbers nor sleeps." An earthly parent, even in his most tender solicitude, may commit most fearful errors, but with God dwelleth perfect wisdom. An earthly parent may exercise the most constant care; but of necessity his power is limited, and often he is compelled to look on and see his loved ones perish, while he cannot help them. But the Father who dwells above is God; and never may his children trust in him in vain, "for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Another blessed privilege of God's children is,

(3) Heirship.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs — heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ."

Do not children inherit the possessions of their parents? So shall also the children of God have an inheritance with him. Heirs of God! What mind can compass that idea! To be an heir of the rich of earth, we easily comprehend, though their riches be counted by millions. But to be an heir of Him who has created the universe surpasses our power of appreciation. Yet, it is a reality of which we speak. God's own word declares it. His adopted children shall be his heirs.

Necessarily involved in this heirship of God's children is,

(4) Their glorious exaltation.

Men esteem it highly honorable to be allied to the great of earth, and often, by virtue of such alliance alone, do persons gain esteem and elevation, which by their own personal merit they could never have attained. The hereditary titles and dignities of earth are illustrations of the truth, that alliance to the great is honorable. To be the son of a king, is to possess the title of prince, and to be exalted in the estimation of men. What exaltation, then, belongs to him who is acknowledged as a son, by the King of kings! To be allied to the finitely great confers honor; what honor then is his who is allied to him whose greatness is infinite!

This exaltation may not be acknowledged by the men of this world. Nay, there ever have been those, living from hour to hour as mere pensioners on our Father's bounty, who have treated with the utmost contempt and scorn our Father's own children — God's sons and daughters.

"Alas," says Bunyan, "they are some of them so mean that they are not worth taking notice of, by the high ones of the world; but their betters do respect them; the angels of God do not count themselves too good to attend upon them, and camp about them to deliver them." These holy ones know what it is to be sons of God. Lazarus, as he lay at the rich man's gate, was spurned even by hired menials. But what mattered this? Bright angels from the upper sphere knew his rank as a son of God, and took their stations about him, even in his low estate; and when he died, bore him in triumph to Abraham's bosom. If men of the world do not understand it now, the day is at hand when the exaltation of the sons of God will be fully acknowledged. If the Christian is despised by men, let him not give way to shame, but rather remember his title, and pity their blindness.

2. Christians are called to be co-laborers with God.

"We are laborers together with God." Were it not that these words are familiar to our ears, they would most surely excite astonishment.

Co-laborers with God — the Maker of the Universe! In what? In the work of creation or providence? Were it so, what honor would be ours! Were we commissioned from his throne to speed into distant space, and call worlds into being, and preside over the wonderful changes which divine power effects; to set suns in their centres, and order the revolutions of planets in their appointed orbits, or on their axes; or even to control and

direct the agencies of a single sphere, like that on which we live; to fix the boundaries of the waters and make the streams flow on their course; to give growth to the herb of the field and life to the animals that roam over the land; to set the winds in motion and direct the course of the storms; to awaken the internal agencies which send up the fiery stream of the volcano, and make the earth tremble and quake; were these and such duties as as these assigned to us, in which we might be co-laborers with the great Architect and Ruler of the Universe, how honorable would be our position, and how responsible our charge!

But these are not the greatest works of God. Magnificent indeed are the displays of divine power, exhibited in the innumerable worlds of his creation; but more glorious far are the manifestations of his divine attributes, in the work of redemption. To speak into being is great,— to redeem is greater still.

"Those mighty orbs proclaim thy power;
Their motions speak thy skill:
And on the wings of every hour,
We read thy patience still.

"But when we view thy strange design,
To save rebellious worms,
Where justice and compassion join
In their divinest forms.

"Here the whole Deity is known,
Nor dares a creature guess,
Which of the glories brighter shone,
The justice or the grace."

In this greater, more glorious work of the Deity it is that Christians are called to share. Here, by divine appointment, they become co-laborers with God. They are called to work not upon senseless, dead matter, but upon intelligent immortal souls: and the effects of their labors are not temporary and passing, but enduring as eternity. The men saved by their instrumentality are saved forever, and forever will their bliss and glory augment.

But how are Christians to be instrumental in accomplishing this work of God?

(1) By their example. Them the Saviour has styled the light of the world, and by the illustration afforded in their characters, are men to judge of the power and excellency of that gospel which offers to save them.

If that example is as it ought to be — such as to constrain men to acknowledge that a divine power has wrought upon them, and that they are under the influence of motives of which the world knows nothing — much will be done towards leading observers to the embrace of the gospel. In a multitude of instances, the conviction, forced upon the conscience by a holy example alone, has resulted in conversion; and vastly more numerous have been the cases, where such example has favorably affected the mind of the observer for the reception of the truth which it illustrated. The arguments of the lips sophistry can evade; but the argument of a holy life is unanswerable. Therefore has the Saviour commanded— "Let your light *so* shine before men, that they may

see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven."

(2) Again, Christians share in this work of God, as ambassadors commissioned to declare to men the truth, and urge on them the motives of the gospel. "As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Thus spoke the apostle, and thus should every Christian feel and speak. None but Christians will thus speak — none but those who have themselves become reconciled to God through his Son, can consistently do so. It is to them alone, that this work of winning men to the acceptance of the gospel message, is committed; and it is through their instrumentality that this world is to be brought to Christ. The first publishment of gospel tidings, to the shepherds on the plains of Judea, was by the angelic host, but since then, men have ever been the messengers to their fellows, and we are plainly taught that so it is ever to be, until the millenial morn shall break, and all shall know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest. God has devised the wondrous plan, Christ has died on the cross to perfect it, and the labors of Christ's disciples, by divine appointment, are to bring the great truth and doctrine of human redemption into contact with the hearts and consciences of men. Thus are they co-laborers with God.

Just in proportion as Christians are faithful to their calling, as agents in this work, are converts multiplied. So the whole history of Christianity proves. Should the whole church cease from labor, the advancement

of the gospel among men would cease, and should the whole church come up to the full measure of their duty, the whole world would soon be saved.

How important, how responsible a part, then, have Christians to bear, in this great work of human redemption! In deed and in truth—not by a fiction of language—are they co-laborers with God. By their holy example, by their forcible presentations of truth, by their earnest persuasions and exhortations, by their prayers and persevering efforts, they can be the means of saving from eternal ruin those who else would perish. In the world to come, their instrumentality will be fully acknowledged. The souls thus saved shall shine as stars in their crown of rejoicing forever and ever.

Once more,

(3) Christians are called to the reward and blessings of an eternal life. To attempt a description of that future glory, which scripture has declared to be far beyond the most exalted conceptions of man, would be vain. Let it suffice to say, that the blessings which the redeemed shall enjoy are such as God's infinite wisdom and power only can prepare. At the day of final reward, Christ will say to those who have believed upon him, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Is not this sufficient warrant of the unspeakable blessedness of the eternal state?

We have briefly considered the Christian calling. Let us give a few moments attention to the exhortation of the apostle, that we may

III. Walk worthy of our calling.

Surely no one who has a right to the name of Christian can feel indifferent to such a matter as this. No one can, when sensible of the important position he occupies as a follower of Christ, be content without a strenuous effort to realize, in some good degree, the character which such an one is supposed to maintain. As a means of stimulating ourselves to such effort, we ought

1. Ever to keep our vocation in lively remembrance. We ought not to allow ourselves to forget, or even to be unmindful for a moment, of our high connections, and of the privileges and duties which spring therefrom. Who has called us, and to what are we called? It is God, whose voice we have heard, and whose grace has been given, to summon us away from the paths of sin, to become his children with all the privileges and duties and hopes of children, to become co-laborers with him, in the greatest and most glorious of all his works, and to participate in all the rewards and blessings of an eternal life in heaven. Such is our vocation, and always ought we to keep it before us. Wherever we go, in whatever business we are engaged, whatever our surroundings of blessing, of temptation, of trial, this should never be absent from our thoughts.

What a controlling, strengthening, guiding influence would such a constant lively remembrance of his vocation have upon the Christian! When flattered by the world, and tempted to an ambitious striving after the honors which fade and perish, or when despised and scorned by men, as a follower of

the lowly Nazarine, he would equally be kept from an unholy longing after sinful glory, and from yielding basely to sinful shame, by the thought, "I am a son of God."

What comparison can there be between the honor that comes from men, and that which comes from above? When enticed by the glitter of earthly treasures to set his heart upon them, he remembers that he is an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ; and shall one having in view such a glorious inheritance debase himself, by falling in love with the "beggarly elements of this world?" When he looks upon a world lying in sin, and asks himself the fearful question, "Must all these perish in their evil ways?" he remembers that he is called by God to be a co-laborer in the work of their salvation, and he is animated by the thought, not only of the honor of this high alliance, but of the assurance of success which it involves. When he is cast into the furnace of affliction, and darkness envelops him on every side, and difficulties beset him, and trials overwhelm him, he remembers that he is called to the rewards and blessings of an eternal life, and soon all these evils will end, and then shall come the promised rest.

It whatever condition the Christian may be placed, whatever the circumstances that surround him, he will ever find in the memory of his vocation a powerful impulse to worthy action. He will derive from it strength to stand, courage to resist, resignation and fortitude to endure, zeal and perseverance to labor, and hope to cheer and bless. Let us then

ever and always bear it in our minds, that we are Christians, the chosen sons and heirs of God, and that we may walk worthily of our vocation.

Finally, let us in all these relations involved,

(2) Strive to demean ourselves as if he who called us were personally present to our sight.

We know that he is ever present, for so has his word taught us, and that he looks upon those he has called to be his children, with the kind interest of a father. If we remember this, when any question of duty arises, or any temptation comes, or any trial, there will be but little danger of our going far astray. The thought of the presence of a holy God, to whom we hold such relations as have been mentioned, will prove a most effective revealer of all those sophistries of the evil heart, by which it seeks to avoid duties or gain consent from conscience to indulge in sin. Those adroit self deceptions which men practice upon themselves are at once exposed, and made to appear in their true character, when looked at in the presence of him who searches the heart.

Let us then, brethren, keep God, who has called us, ever in our thoughts as present, and we shall walk more worthy of our high calling. Am I doing the work given me? Am I exercising the faith and love he has made it my privilege to possess? Do I feel that I am his child and that his Spirit dwells in me? Let such be our self-promptings at all times, and surely we shall walk more worthy of our vocation.

SERMON VII.

MORAL SHADOWS.

THAT AT LEAST THE SHADOW OF PETER PASSING BY MIGHT OVERSHADOW SOME OF THEM.— ACTS V. 15.

The sacred historian declares, "By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one." What a beneficent shadow was this, and how honorable the position of its owner! No king upon his throne ever enjoyed so enviable a distinction or was permitted to be the almoner of so great benefits to the needy. Behold the apostle as he walks along the streets of the city! Is there in his appearance aught that marks him as the especial favorite of heaven? Nothing save the mingled expression of holy confidence and joy that sits upon his features. A pharisee, standing on the corner of

the street, seeing the passing throng, turns a cold look upon him and with a scornful curl of the lip, says, "This is the fellow of whom I have so often bought fish in the market; what has so exalted him in the estimation of the people?" With this sneer, he turns away; but the people follow. They have seen the mighty works done by his hands. Day after day, fresh proofs of miraculous power have been given, in the healing of the lame, in the curing of disease. Witnesses have been multiplying till they have become a throng, testifying to their own experience of the healing mercy. Thus has the popular confidence grown, till the very sight of the apostle sends a thrill of joy to the hearts of the afflicted. Learning of his approach, the dwellers along the streets hasten to bring forth their sick on beds and couches and set them by the wayside, that at least the shadow of Peter might fall on them, as he passes.

This was a physical shadow; its influence was felt as a physical cause; it reached merely the ills of the flesh. But Peter cast another shadow more beneficent far than that formed by the interception of the sunlight; a shadow which fell not on the bodies, but on the souls of men, whose power was not for the curing of physical disease, but for the healing of spiritual maladies. Peter's greatest honor was not in the miraculous power which he was permitted to exert for the physical well-being of his fellow men; nor did he so esteem it. This was a mere incidental; it was in the commission given him to preach the everlasting gospel, the privilege of bearing the good

news of salvation through the cross to a perishing world, in which he gloried. And oh, what a mighty work for good did he accomplish, by his words of truth spoken with the fervor of earneatness and the authority of inspiration! See him on the day of Pentecost, as he stands before the multitude of Jerusalem, and pours forth those divinely begotten utterances, those winged arrows of truth, whose sharp points pierce the hearts and consciences of thousands and compel them in agony of conviction to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" See him before the Sanhedrim, not only boldly confessing Jesus, but with emphasis declaring to those proud pharisees and enraged persecutors, that there is no salvation for them but of Christ. See him again, at the beautiful gate of the temple, making known to the people, whom his miracle has filled with wonder, the way of life through the Messiah crucified and risen again. Follow him on his way to Joppa, as he goes discoursing to the multitudes on the same great theme. Go with him to the abode of Cornelius, to whose household he breaks the bread of life, welcoming with gladness the Gentiles to the participation of gospel mercy. In imagination, trace him through his long career as an apostle, till, like his master, he is brought to the cross; and everywhere we shall behold the same influence for truth and righteousness — everywhere, as in the streets of Jerusalem, a healing shadow accompanies him. What multitudes of hearts have experienced its genial power — what thousands of lives have felt its rectifying influence— what hosannas of praise are now sounding in the

blessed regions of light and glory as the eternal results!

But not Peter alone has cast a shadow in the world. As in the physical world every human being casts a shadow, so is it in the moral and spiritual world. It is a necessity. No man can avoid it. As well and as easily may one walk forth in the bright sunlight and refuse the company of his physical shadow, forbidding it to go before him, or to follow after him, as he may walk forth among his fellows, in the daily course of life, as to refuse the attendance of his moral shadow. It will accompany him be he pleased or displeased to have it so.

The elements which enter into human influence are so numerous that we may not mention them all. Intellect, conduct, character, spirit, bearing, are prime constituents. When a man of great intellectual strength appears among us, we instinctively pay to him a kind of reverence, and when in his presence, though not a word is spoken, we feel the shadow of that mind upon us. More or less of this feeling we experience ever, in our intercourse with men, especially with those held in high repute for learning, for inventive genius, for eloquence in speech, for wisdom in council, for ability in carrying forward great enterprises, for skill in business. Mind is felt everywhere, and we are ever walking in its shadow.

So also character has power. Whether good or bad, it throws a shadow on the community which we cannot fail to recognize. Who of us is not conscious of the influence which every man of marked moral

qualities exerts upon ourselves, when in our presence, or when brought before our minds in thought? It is impossible for us to contemplate the character of any man, without experiencing the effect favorably or unfavorably. Suppose him a man marked for uprightness and honesty in his dealings, or for kindness and affability of manner, in his intercourse with others, or for his benevolence toward the poor; feelings of respect and love are awakened in our hearts toward him, and we feel an impulse to imitate his virtues. Wherein we fail of these excellences he is a reproof to us more effective than language can give. Or suppose him of different character, — unjust and selfish in his dealings, morose, contentious, uncivil in his ordinary bearing, cruel, hard-hearted toward the poor, ungenerous and harsh in his treatment of those dependent upon him; and we feel an instinctive repulsion from him, and are impressed with the unloveliness of such traits of character. Or suppose him possessed of a proud, domineering spirit, which seeks to make all around bend to his will; and the spirit of independence is awakened within us, and our dislike for such attributes of character is confirmed. So ever is the shadow cast on us. A political procession marches through our streets with inscribed banners borne aloft. We look upon them, read the inscriptions, comprehend their significance and feel awakened within us the sentiment of approval or disapproval, and perhaps form purposes to aid the advancement of the cause presented, or to oppose it with all our power. So to each individual, the rest of the world

form one grand procession, whose characters, like inscribed banners, are presented to his gaze, as they march before him, all exerting some influence for good or evil upon him.

As we speak of character, so may we speak of the actions of men, of their words, or even of their bearing, their expression of countenance, their tone of voice, their general appearance. Each and all help to make up the shadow they cast. Rarely do we meet a person who does not, through some of these traits or characteristics, or by the combination of them, throw the shadow of his or her influence upon us. Some persons we meet upon the street, whose sunny countenances beaming kindliness upon all leave a sweet impression, and draw our hearts into a closer union with our race; others ever carry an expression of dissatisfaction and petulance; and others, again, a kind of scowl of defiance, as if they thought every one they met an enemy against whom they must put themselves in hostile attitude. We feel a cold chill as we pass such a shadow.

Tone, too, carries with it a mighty influence. The modulations of voice very often effect more than the words uttered. All the emotions and feelings are thus indicated — pride, insolence, contempt, anger, humility, genuine urbanity, respect, love, and the like. Even in the most trivial intercourse of life this appears common. A stranger stands in yon doorway, not noticing that one wishes to enter. A kindly voice is heard, "Please stand aside, sir, and let me pass." The gentleness of the tone falls agreeably on the ear, and a pleasing impression abides with

him long. Perhaps a different tone of mingled complaint and disrespect is heard — uttering the same words — and for days, or even years, the unhappy impression thus made, may never disassociate itself from the individual who created it, but remain to work mischief in the heart of the hearer. A mother speaks in a gentle, loving tone to her child, and soothes its little sorrows, and fills its heart with love; or a cross, petulant "go away" is returned to the little one when, worried or unhappy, it comes with its little troubles, and oh, what a cloud settles down on that little heart! What shadows of darkness and chilliness are too often thrown over a whole household by the unhappy spirit of a single member!

And so it is in all the relations of life. Shadows agreeable and beneficial, or dark, and gloomy, and evil, are falling all around us. That of a single man often affects a whole community, yea, even a nation, or the world. Suppose that from some elevated position above our sphere we might look down and trace the progress of a total eclipse over the surface of the earth. See the dark shadow travel over land, over sea, enveloping city, country, kingdom after kingdom, in its black night and chilly gloom. Like this was the shadow of an Alexander, as he marched with his conquering army, spreading devastation and ruin over city and country and kingdom. What a dark eclipse fell on tribes and nations of Asia, as he swept over them in the pride of his might. In the dark line of his travel we behold armies annihilated, kings dethroned, countries subjugated, everywhere human blood flowing in rivers. Nor has the shadow

spread over these lands alone. Down through the ages it comes, falling with baleful influence on human hearts, causing to grow up, in its deadly shade, crowds of ambitious thoughts and desires, which excite to like deeds of warfare, and blood, and wicked conquests. And so will the shadow of this famous conqueror continue to exert its baneful influence, while history is read. In like manner, on the pages of history, do the shadows of others — his imitators and compeers in warfare — emperors, generals, and marshals, send down to ages following their evil power, filling the minds of thousands with false ideas of glory and honorable action.

In like manner the shadows of great statesmen have fallen on their own and succeeding times for good or for evil. So too of great writers in poetry and prose; great teachers, inspired and uninspired; and so of great discoverers, and inventors, and laborers, and leaders in the various departments of enterprise and usefulness. The world is full of shadows coming down from the past and falling on the living.

But, turning from the past to the present, let us view the shadows cast by different characters in our own communities. Some of these are beneficial and blessed, and fall on us with a genial power; others are baleful and cursed, and fall on us with a withering, deadly influence. How terrible the shadow of a rum-seller! We read of the deadly shade of the fabled upas tree, in distant Java, beneath which the unsuspecting traveler sits for a moment's repose, and rises not again. The subtle poison,

insinuating itself into the system, begets a pleasing languor, followed by a blissful dreaminess, sleep, unconsciousness, death. Equally sure, unspeakably more dreadful, the fate of the poor victims on whom falls the shadow of the evil vender of intoxicating poisons. The shade, on its outer edge, seems even pleasant and attractive to the young and giddy throng; but once entered, it speedily grows darker and blacker, till, at its centre, it becomes the blackness of darkness. Follow its gradations: The brilliant wit over the sparkling wine-cup, the boisterous mirth, the midnight revel, appetites made strong, daily draughts a necessity, vicious associations, loss of self respect, ruined morals, ruined health, dissipated features, unhappy homes, ill-clad families, abused wives and children, disgraceful broils, crimes, thefts, robberies, murders, the felon's doom, the drunkard's grave. On such scenes and such characters falls the rum-seller's shadow, and such are the gradations by which it deepens from the twilight of gloom to the midnight of darkness.

Again, turn for a look upon the shadow of a gambler. Step forward where it may fall on you for a moment; and what a chilling sensation of indefinable fear runs through all your veins, as if you were momentarily expecting to feel the poisonous fangs of some venomous reptile! I remember a trip, some years since, up the Mississippi. On board, among the crowd of passengers, was a gang of these desperate plunderers. Day after day and night after night, in that crowded saloon, they plied their infernal trade, inveigling the unwary into their toils;

allowing them to win for a while, then cautiously changing the fortune; leading on by a varying success and loss in an exciting course, till at last, by a few rapid strokes, the work was finished, and the poor dupes were stripped of all and turned over to despair and drunkenness. Oh, in that shadow, what ruin there was! We may not follow it to the end.

The infidel, the opposer of divine truth, casts his shadow in community where he dwells, and how do faith and love and virtue perish as it falls on them. He utters words of cavil against the doctrines of the gospel; throws out plausibly constructed objections against the inspired authority of the Bible; reproaches professed Christians for their inconsistencies, with bitterness; those inclined to scepticism hear and are strengthened in their unbelief; those who wish for excuse to reject the claims of truth are helped to refuse the obligations that press on their consciences; those disposed to candor, but of doubtful mind, are thrown into uncertainty and wander in darkness; and even those beginning seriously to inquire the way of salvation are hindered, if not thrown back entirely into former carelessness and indifference; and in a thousand ways the influence is felt, upon various classes, to pervert or destroy. The influence of an artful, malicious infidel, in a community, is most alarmingly pernicious. His shadow is the shadow of death: souls perish in it.

And what is the shadow of an unfaithful professor of religion? He has publicly claimed to be a disciple of Jesus, and is set before the world as an illustration of the power and value of grace to renew

the heart and sanctify the life. But he has long failed to exhibit those fruits of the Spirit which men have been taught to expect from him. On the contrary he exhibits a worldly, unchristian spirit. In the place of benevolence, he exhibits selfishness; in the place of a liberal, generous conduct toward his fellow men, he shows a grasping disposition which seizes every opportunity to accumulate earthly treasure, at the expense of others. In the place of prayerfulness and a love for the house of prayer, he exhibits an aversion for the exercises of devotion. The family altar is neglected, the gatherings of disciples in the house of prayer are deserted, the closet is forsaken. His life seems to say, "What profit shall I have if I pray unto him?" Instead of zeal in the cause of God, activity in labor for the salvation of sinners, a spirit of sacrifice akin to that of his master, the world beholds indifference, spiritual stupidity and covetous withholding, in time of Zion's need. Professing brethren, is the shadow cast by any among you like this? Not so dark perhaps we all may truly say. Thank God's grace that we can. But let us beware, lest we any even approach such a character. Let us take care that the shadow of our example, in respect of words, acts or spirit, be not in any degree prejudicial to the cause we claim to love; that it may never cast a chill upon the hearts of our brethren, or upon the the souls of them that are without.

We have glanced at the shadows of men of evil character and evil lives—cold, dismal, dark, destructive. Those of the good in character and life are

the opposite — warm, pleasant, bright, beneficial. Look at a Howard. He has cast a shadow of benevolence upon his fellow men; warming their hearts with love; filling their minds with happy thoughts; cheering and benefitting their souls with a generous influence, ever since the days of his devoted, unpurchased labor for the poor and outcast and the wretched inmates of prisons and penitentiaries. The world is better now for that example and that influence, and ever will be while his shadow falls on appreciating souls. We, to-day, are better for it; and were some object of benevolence urged upon our sympathies, the example of a Howard, vividly portrayed, would inspire greater liberality. Sitting within his shadow, we should more forcibly feel the unworthiness of a covetous, withholding, and the loveliness of a generous, spirit. The champion of truth in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther,— what a shadow is his! We see him, single-handed, girt with the power and courage which faith in the truth and faith in his divine master gave him, standing up in bold defiance of Pope, cardinals and bishops, emperor, kings and nobles, lords temporal and spiritual, and with confidence and unyielding firmness maintaining the purity of those doctrines he has learned from God's word, at the peril of his life. Like Paul, upon whom the great truth of justification by faith, only, has laid such fast hold; and has so filled his soul with its divine influence, he counts not his own life dear unto him, so that he may fulfill his course and the ministry of salvation committed to him. Strong in the Lord, devoted to

the cause of pure religion, he goes forward, yielding to no opposition, deterred by no fear, stopping at no obstacle, but fighting valiantly the good fight of truth, till victory is won, and multitudes, long held under the worst bonds of superstition, and oppressed by papal tyranny, are freed forever. Through succeeding generations, the influence of that great reformation, inaugurated by Luther, has been spreading through the Christian world. The shadow of the great Reformer has fallen with its beneficent influence on more than three centuries of the Christian world, and thousands on thousands have, through all that time, blessed God for the light of truth which his grace made to shine into the heart of the monk of Wittemburg.

But we need not speak of those alone, whose prominence has caused them to fill the eye of the world, as instances of beneficent influence. Multitudes are they whose names have scarcely been heard beyond the circle of friends who have learned to love them, who have cast a shadow, not as wide, but as blessed in its nature, as they whom God's providence has set on high. That Sunday school teacher, who died lamenting that he had never been able to accomplish anything of real worth, through years of devoted, untiring labor, had been casting a silent yet powerful influence, which he could not measure. When he was gone, one after another came forward to attribute their conversion under God to his faithful words and earnest, loving manner. That gentle pious mother whose cares and labors have been confined to her own household,

and whose loving counsel and prayers and quiet influence have done more than all other causes combined to foster good principles in the minds and hearts of her children — tell me, is it not her shadow that falls on the communities in which those children move as worthy and valued citizens? Is it not her shadow that falls on the congregations swayed by their words of truth? Is it not her shadow that falls on a whole people whose national councils have been influenced and directed by the one who came forth from her humble household? The Father of our Country was once a child on the bosom of a mother: and how much we owe to that mother, for our Washington, we can never fully know. And how much this whole nation is and ever will be indebted to that humble Christian mother who, in the lowly hut in the woods of Kentucky, and in the rough cabin amid the wilds of Indiana, instructed our own Lincoln in the sacred truth of the Bible, and formed within him that unswerving principle of honesty, which so fitted him to become the safe and sure pilot of our national ship, amid the stormy surges and angry breakers of the great Rebellion, it would be presumption to say. We know his own words, uttered with a quivering voice and a tearful eye — "All that I am or hope to be I owe to my angel mother — blessings on her memory"; and we err not in saying that it is her shadow, as well as his, that falls on us now, from the grave of his martyrdom. Ah, faithful mother, little dost thou know whither through thy children, or thy children's children, thy shadow may go. "A suffering child of

God," says the Christian Intelligencer, "who was lately laid in her grave, said to her pastor a few hours before she died, 'I feel as if I were going to heaven without any sheaves.' She had lingered long with consumption, which wasted her young life away, just as she had finished her first score of years; and her chief wish for a longer life was that she might 'do more for him who had done so much for her.' But the patient sufferer knew not how her quiet testimonies for Christ and her exemplary submission to his will, and her latest joys, rising even into rapture, had ministered to those who saw and watched her during her illness. And she went home with her pale, thin hands full of golden sheaves — the sheaves of sanctified trial and ripened faith. The garner of our Lord is full of such harvestings. Active exertion is not the only way of in-gathering. The passive virtues are often the most fruitful. They are the only sheaves which multitudes of God's reapers can gather. In the stirring external Christian work of our times these truths are apt to be forgotten or overlaid. Our Saviour's obedience was both active and passive, and his followers should never forget the prominence which is always given in the Scriptures, not merely to his expiatory sufferings, but also to those which were sympathetic and exemplary. To know 'the fellowship of his sufferings,' is to know also 'the power of his resurrection.' And they are greatly mistaken, who think that 'no sheaves' are to be gathered in the Valley of Humiliation. In no part of the wide harvest-field are there more of

those who 'go forth weeping bearing precious seed,' and who shall 'doubtless come again bringing their sheaves with them.'" And so the active, zealous. faithful Christian, and the afflicted, suffering, patiently waiting Christian, in whatever sphere of life he may move, or endure, is casting a shadow of influence, the extent of which, it is neither his privilege nor that of those who observe him to measure in this life. Eternity will reveal it to his unspeakable joy.

My hearers, we are all casting shadows upon the circles and communities in which we live. What are they? Are they shadows of good or evil? Do they help Christian virtues to grow and thrive, or make them wither and die where they fall? As fathers and mothers, as neighbors and friends, as brethren and sisters of the church say, what is the character of that secret, subtle power called influence, which, by the very nature of things, we must exert over the hearts and lives, and temporal and eternal destinies of those with whom we come in contact? Is it such that in future days they shall bless our memory? Is it such that in heaven, fully appreciating its effects, we ourselves find it an element of our blessedness forever? We are passing away. The places that now know us shall soon know us no more. But when we are dead, we shall not be all dead. Our shadows will not die with us. Nay, on many hearts they may fall with mightier power than while we live. Those dear ones of the household from whom we go, upon them will come, from our remembered words and ways and spirit, an influence that cannot

be estimated; for who can measure the intensity of that shadowy power that streams forth from newly made graves upon the loved ones left? Oh, are we all living with the remembrance in our hearts? Are we taking care that the influence of our daily acts, words and spirit is such as we shall wish to leave behind us? May God grant us grace so to live, that the prayer of one on record shall not be ours: "Bury my influence with me; I die, but oh, bury my influence with me."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 899 320 5

S. Milton Meed.